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‘Inbetweenness’: Transcultural thinking in my compositional practice

Lee Chie Tsang Isaiah

Portfolio of compositions and commentary submitted to
the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

April 2018

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Abstract

This thesis explores the notion of ‘in-betweenness’ through transcultural thinking in my compositional practice as a commentary to my portfolio of compositions. My thinking has been inspired by Tim Ingold’s philosophical idea of ‘wayfaring’ as a way to navigate processes by which insights emerge from collaborative investigations. My portfolio makes an original contribution to music by engaging with Malaysian Chinese and Indigenous cultural materials in fresh ways with a focus on music and dance collaborations with Indigenous Malaysian references, aural/oral traditions in Hakka poetry, and traditions of pattern making related to Borneo bead work. These projects have enabled me to deepen my experience and understanding of notions of entanglement and of how highly diverse elements can be unified through collaboration, presenting a series of case studies that also vary in style and the modality of discussion used. The discussion focuses around four main aspects related to intercultural exchange and collaboration: the value of negotiation, the meaning of ambiguity, strategies for navigating cultural meanings, and processes of cultural and musical transmission. Through these, I gain insights into the perception and practice of cultural exchange to find a new creative threshold for opening up new cultural dialogues in my compositional work.

Keywords: ‘in-betweenness’, transcultural practice, transmission, transformation, collaboration

Table of contents

Copyright statement	2
Abstract.....	3
Table of contents	4
Portfolio	6
Table of figures.....	9
Acknowledgments	12
Introduction.....	13
Chapter 1: Intercultural exchange	21
1.1 Learning skills for intercultural exchange: <i>Interbreathment</i>	21
1.2 The collaboration between dancers and musicians	22
1.3 Choreographical notation.....	25
1.4 Creating a gong installation	29
Chapter 2: Transcultural exchange	45
2.1 <i>Interfusion V – A Song for Herh</i>	47
2.2 <i>Re-sketch(es)</i> : Sketches as maps	56
2.3 <i>Re-sketch(es) II – Resurrection</i> : Improvisational sketch	65
Chapter 3: An aural/oral transmission and transformation of a family treasure: <i>Yu Moi</i>	78
3.1 The concept of aural/oral transmission	78
3.2 Hakka children’s rhyme: A Lee family ‘treasure’	81
3.3 The origin of the sound material of <i>Yu Moi</i> : The guqin solo recordings	84
3.4 An idiomatic process of ‘retranslation’: A process of transformation and its transformation from music instrument to human voice	84
3.4 (a) First stage.....	85
3.4 (b) Second stage	86
3.4 (c) Third stage	87
3.4 (d) Fourth stage	87
3.5 A story teller’s music/story notation: A visual score.....	89
3.6 Staging the visual score in live performance	91
3.7 Bringing the ‘story’ back into life: Transmitting the ‘experiences’ from the live performance back to the audience.....	94
3.8 Some afterthoughts	95
Chapter 4: Patterns of transformation: <i>Linangkit</i>.....	97
4.1 The <i>Linangkit</i> project.....	97
4.2 A new form of <i>linangkit</i> pattern: Sketching the structural organization of the oboe piece	102

4.3 Rhythmic patterning.....	103
4.4 ‘ <i>Siling</i> ’: Fabric as a temporal space contacting sound and silence.....	106
4.5 Moving away from an embroidery form.....	109
4.6 The <i>Giring</i>	112
4.7 Further formats of the piece: Video and oboe solo.....	114
Chapter 5: Bead music: Entanglements and the unity of different elements.....	116
5.1 Introduction: The Borneo bead	116
5.2 Contacting the beads: a paradoxical world	117
5.3 The bead music concept.....	120
5.4 <i>Bead[s](by bead[s])</i>	121
Conclusion.....	138
Bibliography.....	142

Word count (excluding footnotes, abstracts, bibliography, acknowledgements, and appendices): 28,648

Portfolio

1. *Interbreathment* (2013)

for gong installation (52 traditional *Kulintangan*, 8 *Kadazandusun* gongs), two dancers, metal *kulintangan*, *slenthem*, *sompoton* (*Kadazandusun* mouth organ), 21 & 36-pipe soprano sheng (Chinese mouth organ), cross-disciplinary project: gong installation music, and dance collaboration

First performance: 8th September 2013

Venue: Studio Saadiah, School of Arts (now Faculty of Humanities, Arts, and Heritage) at the Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Duration: approx. 23:30

Composer: Chie Tsang Lee

Choreographer: Sook Kuan Tang

Dancers: Sook Kuan Tang & Grazeilla Genevie George

36th Chinese soprano sheng: Lee Ren Liang

Percussionist:

Priscilla Chia, Chie Tsang Lee

Lighting: Victor Pangaya

2. *V- A Song for Herh* (2014)

for horn in F, piano, violin, five string double bass (each performer doubling one gong)

Ensemble Discord Workshop

First performance: 24th March 2014 University of Huddersfield, St. Paul's Hall.

Second performance: 17th April 2014 Ghent, Belgium.

Duration: approx. 14 mins

Horn: Corey Klein

Piano: Tomoko Honda

Violin: Takao Hyakutome

Double bass: Pieter Lenaer

3. *Re-sketch(es)* (2014)

for duduk, shakuhachi, shō, 37-pipe Chinese soprano sheng, guzheng, erhu, cello

First performance: 5 editions Atlas Academy workshop 2014 at Amsterdam Conservatory Haitink Hall

Duration: approx. 11 mins

Conductor: Christopher Trapani

Atlas Ensemble:

Duduk in A, G, D: Gevorg Dabaghyan

Shakuhachi: Harrie Starreveld

Shō: Naomi Sato

37-pipe Chinese soprano sheng Yifei

Guzheng: Ding Xue Er

Erhu: Xing Lu

Cello: Antonis Pratsinakis

4. *Re - Sketch(es) II- Resurrection* (2014)

for guqin, pipa, alto flute, oboe, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello.

First performance: 27th Sept 2014, New Music Ensemble & MCI Classical Chinese Music Ensemble, China Day Music Festival Royal Danish Academy of Music Studio Hall

Duration: approx. 9:10

Musicians:

Guqin: Zhang Meng

Pipa: Cui Ying

Alto flute: Mai Kamstrup

Oboe: Ekaterina Skidanova

(Bass) clarinet: Dario Brignoli

Violin: Johanna Qvamme

Viola: Benedikte Artved

Cello: Josefine Opsahl

5. *Yu Moi* (2014)

for voice solo

Collaboration with Anna Chong Kee Xin, Malaysian singer/songwriter.

The first (audio) recording was made in 'Plan A Studio' at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 10th December 2014

Duration: approx. 10:20

Vocalist: Anna Chong Kee Xin

Composer: Chie Tsang Lee

Recording engineer: Abraham Tee

Video recording: Sam Lee, Anna Chong Kee Xin, and Chie Tsang Lee

Video editing: Sam Lee

Special thanks to 'Plan A Studio' & Abraham Tee

6. (a) *The Project of Linangkit* (2014)

3rd (final) rehearsal recording on 23rd December 2014

Duration: approx. 20:15

Dancer/Choreography: Sook Kuan Tang

Oboist (doubling *giring*): Howard Ng

Composer: Chie Tsang Lee

Video: Chie Tsang Lee

Edit: Sam Lee

Venue: Synergy Dance Studio, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.

(b) *Linangkit* (2015)

for solo oboe

First performance: 16th March 2015, St. Paul's Hall, University of Huddersfield.

Oboist: Peter Veale

Duration: approx. 13 minutes

7. *[Re]sketch[es] no.3 – Nunuk Ragang* (2015)

for performing Chinese calligrapher, meta-sax and string quartet

Premiere at the SoundBridge 2015 concert University Putra Malaysia (Dewan Kuliah Fakulti Ekologi Manusia), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 31st October 2015, Sirius Quartet (Fung Chern Hwei, Gregor Huebner, Ron Lawrence, Jeremy Harna), Timothy O'Dwyer (meta-sax), Pang Heng Khan (Chinese calligraphy)

Duration: approx. 9 minutes

8. *Sympathetic [re]sonance (2015)*

for solo piano

First performance: 9th (semi-final stage of the competition) and 12th (closing ceremony gala concert) December 2015, premiered by Hannah Shin, 2nd place winner (1st place awarded) of the 6th ASEAN International Chopin Piano Competition, at Experimental Theatre, University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The piece was commissioned by Persatuan Chopin Malaysia - Chopin Society Malaysia

Duration: approx. 4:10

9. *Bead[s] (by bead[s]) (2015)*

For string quartet and piano

First performance: 11th February 2016, St. Paul's Hall, Huddersfield, UK, premiered by Quartet Bozzini (Clemens Merkel, Alissa Cheung, Stéphanie Bozzini, Isabelle Bozzini) and Philip Thomas.

Dedicated to the Bozzini Quartet, Philip Thomas, and Eleanor Goroh

Duration: approx. 16:35

Table of figures

Chapter 1:

Figure 1.1.....	24
Figure 1.2 (a).....	24
Figure 1.2 (b).....	25
Figure 1.3 (a-b).....	26
Figure 1.4.....	28
Figure 1.5(a-b).....	29
Figure 1.6.....	30
Figure 1.7.....	31
Figure 1.8.....	32
Figure 1.9.....	33
Figure 1.10.....	34
Figure 1.11.....	35
Figure 1.12(a-d).....	36
Figure 1.13.....	37
Figure 1.14.....	38
Figure 1.15.....	39
Figure 1.16.....	40
Figure 1.17.....	41
Figure 1.18.....	42
Figure 1.19.....	42
Figure 1.20.....	43

Chapter 2:

Figure 2.1.....	48
Figure 2.2.....	49
Figure 2.3.....	50
Figure 2.4.....	51
Figure 2.5.....	52
Figure 2.6.....	52
Figure 2.7.....	53
Figure 2.8.....	54
Figure 2.9.....	54
Figure 2.10.....	55
Figure 2.11(a-b).....	56
Figure 2.12.....	58
Figure 2.13.....	59
Figure 2.14.....	62
Figure 2.15.....	63
Figure 2.16.....	64
Figure 2.17.....	66
Figure 2.18 (a-b).....	67
Figure 2.19.....	69
Figure 2.20.....	70
Figure 2.21.....	72

Figure 2.22.....	73
Figure 2.23.....	74
Figure 2.24.....	74
Figure 2.25.....	76

Chapter 3:

Figure 3.1.....	83
Figure 3.2.....	85
Figure 3.3.....	88
Figure 3.4.....	90
Figure 3.5.....	91
Figure 3.6.....	91
Figure 3.7 (a-d).....	92
Figure 3.8 (a-d).....	93
Figure 3.9 (a-b).....	95

Chapter 4:

Figure 4.1(a-c).....	100
Figure 4.2.....	102
Figure 4.3.....	103
Figure 4.4.....	104
Figure 4.5.....	104
Figure 4.6.....	104
Figure 4.7.....	105
Figure 4.8.....	106
Figure 4.9.....	107
Figure 4.10.....	108
Figure 4.11.....	108
Figure 4.12.....	109
Figure 4.13.....	109
Figure 4.14.....	111
Figure 4.15.....	111
Figure 4.16.....	112
Figure 4.17.....	113
Figure 4.18.....	114
Figure 4.19 (a-b).....	114
Figure 4.20.....	115

Chapter 5:

Figure 5.1.....	118
Figure 5.2.....	119
Figure 5.3.....	122
Figure 5.4.....	123
Figure 5.5.....	123
Figure 5.6.....	124
Figure 5.7.....	124
Figure 5.8.....	126

Figure 5.9.....	126
Figure 5.10.....	127
Figure 5.11.....	128
Figure 5.12.....	129
Figure 5.13.....	130
Figure 5.14.....	130
Figure 5.15.....	131
Figure 5.16.....	132
Figure 5.17.....	132
Figure 5.18.....	133
Figure 5.19.....	134
Figure 5.20a.....	134
Figure 5.20b.....	135

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Introduction

There is a difference between ‘between’ and ‘in-between’...Where between is liminal, in-between is arterial; where between is intermediate, in-between is midstream.

(Ingold, 2015, p. 147)

During the period of my PhD studies, I have attempted to find new creative perspectives intensely connected to experiences emerging from my cultural background. I am a fourth-generation member of the Chinese diaspora within a multicultural country, Malaysia, where a focus on differences between races, cultures, and religions strongly informs social and political relations. Within the context of a fairly young developing country that integrates a rich cultural diversity, the subject matter of making intercultural art and questioning definitions of cultural identity has over the years occupied the Malaysian artists who especially engage their creativity within the contemporary art world. One of the significant artistic movements happening in Malaysia is that local scholars, artists, musicians and composers have sought out a ‘common language’ and cultural identity across the country with which they can associate their work within the communal society, and thereby claim to be local artists. This social phenomena is referred to by Syed Ahmad Jamal, a senior Malaysian Modern painter, who depicts the processes around cultural identity formation amongst artists as follows:

Contemporary Malaysian art has made its mark as an expressive form of the living national culture. In the short span of 25 years since *Merdeka*,¹ Malaysian artists have responded to situations and events in the developing nation. Malaysian artists currently move in various directions of commitment – drawing material from myths and legends, probing into questions of identity, regional cultural heritage, personal

¹ *Merdeka*, a Malay word which literally means Independence Day.

cosmology, ambiguity of pictorial space, social-political issues, contextual situations with Islam as central to artistic involvement, extension of calligraphic gestures, physical properties of material, dichotomy of traditional and contemporary values, etc. (Jamal, 1981)

Syed Ahmad Jamal's comment shows the great diversity of cultural sources that artists look to where it can be extremely difficult to find commonalities due to the many levels of social, religious, and regional differences. The ideal of finding an emergent unity between differences, however, also raises questions around sustaining and transmitting very specific cultural practices to support community cohesion within a sometimes fragment identity politics and this has also been very much part of my everyday experience as an artist in Malaysia. Different waves and groups of 'powers'² including a Malay-Islamic narrative of Malaysian art, a Chinese narrative of Malaysian art, and a '*muhibah*'³ version have been implemented across the nation since then and dominated the cultural discourse in various ways. The phenomenon of changing values and perceptions around a cultural story is illustrated in an article, 'Love Me in My Batik', written by Yee I-Lan (2012). She talks about how times and processes changed the cultural meaning and the identity of batik through forceful political events and activities, exploring how batik cloth falls into the embrace of popular culture as well as the machinations of state propaganda, becoming a kind of 'political kitsch' or a 'skin' veiling the concept of national identity and eventually transforming into a medium of sources, subjects, and motifs in relation to one or other race, tradition, culture, locality, and faith.

² Further reading can be found in Khairuddin, Yong, B., & Sabapathy (2012).

³ The term *muhibah* is derived from an Arabic word *hubb*, signifying a universal love or affection. Further definition and reading can be found in Ibrahim (2013).

This notion of what can be recognized as a national artistic identity has become even more complex, challenging, and problematic due to the fact that identity itself is constantly shifting and transforming from ‘identity’ into ‘identities’ (and vice versa) over time and from one generation to another. Composers based in West Malaysia – including Chong Kee Yong, Yii Kah Hoe, Saidah Rastam, and Tazul Tajuddin, whose musical works are strongly associated with intercultural elements – have drawn on diverse multicultural worlds to access materials whereby they could establish their musical language and identity. Their work has been given prominence, in particular with the emergence of a contemporary musical scene in Malaysia that can be dated to the first Kuala Lumpur Contemporary Music Festival, in 2009 (KLCMF 2009).⁴ By contrast, in East Malaysia, where I grew up in Sabah,⁵ musical activity has been more research-oriented along ethnomusicological lines that focus on subject areas such as ethnicity, documentation, the popular music scene, and music education. There is, however, surprisingly little work written about compositional creativity, movements, and practices, and specifically how composers engaging in a contemporary musical scene in Malaysia might tackle, integrate, and develop their work and how they respond to the challenging task of cultural integration alongside with their artistic thinking.

The seeds of the work undertaken in this PhD project can be found in my Master’s thesis ‘Chinese calligraphic thinking in my compositional work’ (Lee, 2012). Although this previous research into how one’s cultural ‘mother tongue’ can affect and stimulate one’s compositional thinking and musical imagination gave me a substantial focus by which to locate myself as a composer, my subsequent work has moved into a much more hybrid and in-between space. I found a very strong resonance with the ideas of the eminent British

⁴ This was a historical event gathering and promoting artists and composers within the Southeast Asia region held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from Friday 27th to Sunday 29th November 2009, organised by Goethe-Institute Malaysia and the Malaysian Composers Collective, together with event co-organiser SEGi College Subang Jaya.

⁵ North Borneo (or east-Malaysia), the place where I was born and lived.

anthropologist, Tim Ingold, in particular his idea of ‘correspondence’, which has helped me find another dimension in which to think about intercultural dialogue. In *The Life of Lines* (2015, p.147), Ingold’s use of the term ‘correspondence’ has a very distinctive definition in relation to the words ‘between’ and ‘in-between’.

The ‘between’, on the one hand, can be regarded as a ‘bridge’, an intermediate space in which one is able to link, join, and integrate elements when corresponding with two different aspects at the same time. The ‘in-between’, however, has no particular ‘object’ or point of location; it does not have a specific ‘connector’ to enable it to correspond from two sides: it is a movement passing, twisting, and interacting directly without any absolute point. In other words, the ‘in-between’ is a back-and-forth-interactive-space, where one undergoes the movement of a process, an interstitial state of ongoing activity. Another parallel interpretation suggested by Homi Bhabha (1994) echoing this kind of continual movement of space as a process of development is that cultural hybridity is shaped continually through a transitional moment of emergence, a third dimensional world, the ‘be-coming’ of itself. To me, both Ingold and Bhabha point out a new way of conceiving cultural hybridity, away from an interchange between terms to an interstitial world of becoming.

The breakthrough moment for me in terms of this shift in thinking occurred with my first cross-disciplinary project, *Tōng-通*- (2012), a project commissioned by the Asian Contemporary Ensemble (ACE). This is a ten-minute work involving a collaboration with the ACE musicians; a contemporary dancer, Tang Sook Kuan; a story-teller, Rosemarie Somaiah; and a conductor, Wong Kah Chun. It explores the traditional ritual performances of the *Mengahau* ceremony, celebrated by the *Lotud* people in Sabah, Malaysia. The unstable nature of such a rich project, involving artists from different areas of artistic expertise and cultural backgrounds, made me acutely aware of the impacts and changes I was undergoing. I had previously tried to avoid any uncertainty, especially with my plan to complete the music

beforehand. But what I discovered in the process of collaboration was that the music presented on the stage was no longer the same as it had been, but was ‘becoming other’.

This kind of becoming or crossing-over into a new form through the process of collaboration with the dancer, the story-teller, the musicians, and the stage itself during each session of discussion and negotiation had become the part of my piece. The attributes of the context, the meaning, and the experience of my music seemed to be re-identifying themselves, more or less naturally, even though no further changes were made to the musical notation. The ‘autonomy’ of the music seemed to recede gradually whenever people placed themselves inside it and contributed their work to the project. To me, this linking of a sense of transformative experience – a piece of music eventually becoming another kind of work – was powerfully authentic. In fact, the contribution of the other artists was hardly identified specifically with any one individual at the final stage but made a new whole. I saw how I could unlock this new side of creativity, through a practice underpinned by co-creative contact and interpenetration with other creative energies. This realization strongly relates to how Ingold describes the intimate relationship between ‘making’ and ‘growing’: “Moments of making punctuate the process of growing” (Ingold, 2014, p. 120). What I understand from this is that creative work can be thought of as cultivated rather than made, or the practice of making is the process of being responsive to conditions, to stimuli and opportunities for interaction that evolve in a similar way to how organic things grow in nature.

From the musical point of view, thinking about ‘growing’ as an embryonic process of development of one’s musical creativity brings to mind Bryn Harrison’s statement that silence is not something that exists between events but rather its existence is pregnant with anticipation (Harrison, 2013, p. 44). What Harrison mentions here is his experience of the space of silence in listening to Beuger’s *calme étendue (Spinoza)* (1997). The point that interests me is how Harrison perceived the silence through the process of listening as the

other 'world' which is being fertilized, particularly through his use of the word 'pregnant'. Harrison goes on to describe this musical world as a new 'life' that has been evolved by a continual progression through musical activity, which seems to me to be strongly related to the temporal idea of how an organic space is anticipated and re-established. This abstract notion of 'reciprocal-association', or, so to speak, 'making-in-growing' and 'growing-in-making', has led me to investigate how a new musical identity can be created through collaboration, and this idea of parallel 'growing through living' processes provided me with another artistic perspective to think about cross-cultural and collaborative processes.

The aim of this thesis therefore is not to look at inter-culturality in terms of surface features of a specific contemporary musical style. It is inappropriate for me, at least at this stage, to establish a new musical grammar, compositional system, or any 'oriental' aesthetic so to speak, due to the fact that this investigation is the first attempt to know how I actually might operate in an intercultural world. Besides, I am also aware that my thesis is not a means of corroboration to my compositions as musicological theory or framework. Therefore, the following investigations of this research will not apply and discuss directly any specific musicological framework, but will rather focus more on the development of each work itself, bringing together discussion of compositional questions and methods, and thoughts from a range of philosophical areas, as well as through discussion of other composers' works. In terms of the methodology, I have applied Ingold's idea of 'wayfaring' to my own compositional process as a seemingly meandering journey through multiple cultural references that is about enrichment at every step rather than a focus on pre-determined goals.

Drawing again on Ingold's work, specifically his lecture 'To learn is to improvise a movement along a way of life' (2010), I find highly appealing the idea that 'knowledge' is not received and cannot be transferred directly through any pre-specified means from any

traditional, theoretical, or systematical framework. Rather, creative knowledge is ‘made’ as a result of a continual movement of activities through which one is physically engaged and through putting oneself into the world of learning through practice. Ingold also argues that the essence of self-knowledge and one’s creativity are actually not rendered directly either from the object or the person but through a process of ‘growing’ within. This notion of knowing, being involved, and observing through learning, responding to, and reflecting upon the world will then signify a direction, a path for someone from one stage to another, from one moment in time to another, until they reach the end of their ‘finished’ work. It is a journey of discovery through knowing the world or perhaps, as Ingold says, a ‘guided rediscovery’ in his lecture ‘To learn is to improvise a movement along a way of life’ (video, 2010). What so interests me about this ‘wayfaring’ idea, however, is the process of its ‘becoming’, which I can relate to my own process of creative evolution in which a diverse range of experiences of artistic interchange fertilized and guided the directions and formations of my musical work.

My PhD portfolio traces my journey towards a stronger realization of my intuitions about the power and potential of cross-cultural and cross-art form collaboration to create new spaces for asserting and making identity. Works such as *Interbreathment*, *Yu Moi*, and *Bead[s]* (by *bead[s]*) draw upon elements of my cultural heritage. In them I look at contemporary expressions of materials, firstly in the concrete sense of encoded structures, sounds, text, gestural vocabularies, and secondly the more subtle emotional and cultural content that arises from different approaches to transmitting knowledge across generations, from collaborative exchange and ways of thinking about building communities of shared practice. At the same time, I try to bring elements of Western experimental practice in music with cultural expressions that are meaningful to me in the way they connect with where I come from.

The following thesis that accompanies my portfolio of compositions will outline subjects including aural/oral traditions in Hakka poetry, music and dance collaboration with Indigenous Malaysian references, hybridity of musical patterns, and intercultural performance practice. These subjects will be presented in different ways in terms of the form, style, and modality of discussion. Although there are overlapping interests between works, my discussion of each project will focus on four main aspects related to intercultural exchange and collaboration: the value of negotiation; the meaning of ambiguity; strategies for navigating cultural meanings; and processes of cultural and musical transmission. These foci have been the recurring themes of my research; eventually I hope that this chain of self-reflection, discussion, and activity as well as all the statements, the questions, and the solutions I have made in this period will reach maturity. Last but not least, I hope that these investigations will help me to find a creative ‘threshold’ and open up new cultural dialogues for my future work and myself.

Chapter 1: Intercultural exchange

[M]uch if not all of what we are accustomed to call cultural variation in fact consists of variations of *skills*. By skills I do not mean techniques of the body, but the capabilities of action and perception of the whole organic being (indissolubly mind and body) situated in a richly structured environment. (Ingold, 2000, p. 5)

1.1 Learning skills for intercultural exchange: *Interbreathment*

Tim Ingold's comment, quoted above, suggests that it is the quality of perception and interaction of knowing and learning that enables one to relate to a practice of cultural exchange. He contends that distinctive cultural knowledge consists of different types of 'skill'. This is not a matter of learning a physical technique from others but of building up a new form of 'skill' involving other modes of perception and different priorities. In other words, if one wants to have cultural exchange with others, one has to establish a new way of understanding by knowing the holistic relationship rather simply duplicating a physical technique. That is, to learn a new skill requires the ability to assimilate the other's cultural embodiment. This is a vital process to gaining awareness of a different cultural sensibility and knowledge. Although Ingold provides an anthropological view of technique in his writing, eg: *The Perception of the Environment* (Ingold, 2000), he does not, however, provide very specific examples about the process and the practice of how a new skill is actually embedded and made operational. This concern became my focus in a series of artistic collaborations.

In the summer of 2013, I invited the Malaysian dancer/choreographer, Tang Sook Kuan to collaborate with me on project exploring these kinds of transformations through learning skills within cultural exchange. *Interbreathment* is an evening-long performance-installation piece exploring dialogues between music and dance. I wanted to increase my awareness of this highly complicated and challenging process of exploring how transcultural

exchange and musical identity can actually be shaped and how choreographic ideas can be translated into musical ideas to create the form of a performance. In beginning my investigation, I take the word 'exchange' as something which can be understood as a process of alternation. In his article 'Identity and difference in a globalized world', Melucci (1997) said that 'Change is a goal that we find desirable and towards which our search for the new and different is directed'. In other words, change is an action of adjustment, blurring the identity of two sides in order to discover a new entity through which the adjustment contributed by both sides suggests and distributes an alternative result.

In my experience of collaboration, I have found it highly difficult to identify exactly what sort of exchange is taking place and what are the influences taken and distilled, especially when this process of transformation is saturated with dimensions of multi-cultural layers. As a young composer coming from a multi-racial nation, Malaysia, this idea of cultural entanglement is often held up as an ideal. Yet in practice, there are many areas of separation between cultures on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and cultural traditions. Therefore, the focus on interdisciplinary practice in my work is a way of questioning and examining my assumptions about identity formation. This concept, through an ambiguous process of discovery that blurs something in order to unlock new layers of meaning, was central to my working process. I began my project by looking for analogues between my musical world and the physical world of dancers.

1.2 The collaboration between dancers and musicians

In his article, 'Choreographic objects', William Forsythe, the prominent American dancer and choreographer, says of choreography: "The word itself, like the process it describes, is elusive, agile, and maddeningly unmanageable" (Forsythe, 2011, p. 90). Although the word itself, 'choreography', seemed problematic, complicated, and challenging, I was fascinated by the organic process of the development and practice of its working, which Forsythe

explained as follows: ‘choreography elicits action upon action: an environment of grammatical rule governed by exception, the contraction of absolute proof visibly in agreement with the demonstration of its own failure’ (Forsythe, 2011, p. 90). I found a resonance with this element of uncertainty or rather dynamic fluidity, by which a dancer experiences, moves, and choreographs his/her movement, and could connect it to the way I read a written Chinese character. That is, when Forsythe comments that ‘choreographic thinking being what it is, proves useful in mobilizing language to dismantle the constraints of this degraded station by imagining other physical models of thought that circumvent this misconception’ (Forsythe, 2011, p. 91), this, to me, is similar to the way in which the reading of Chinese calligraphy suggests other imaginative spaces.

In reading Chinese brush calligraphy, I find myself tracing the strokes with a kind of internal physical dance, mentally writing the strokes as I read. One can excavate the energy of these traces by experiencing the embodiment of the character through the process of writing in order to decode these ‘imaginary routes’ created by the strokes through reading. Ling Hwai-min, the artistic director of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, explored this subject extensively in his *Cursive Trilogy*, a series of works based on Chinese calligraphy that combined the ancient practice of Chinese physical disciplines, including meditation, martial arts, and *Tai Chi Tao Yin*, an ancient form of *Chi Kung* (Ya-Ping, 2009). To instill and penetrate these ideas and methods into one’s physical body, Ling’s strategy was to ask the dancer to imitate the trace of the marks in the calligraphic masterpieces by Wang Xizhi and others, as well as to study the Chinese calligraphy of Wei-chung Huang. The dancer adopts the style, shape, and dynamism of the calligraphy, copying the lines as if they were a student learning to write a piece of Chinese calligraphy and allowing the calligraphy to inform and articulate the choreographic grammar, including its rhythms, pulses, and dynamics (Kin-Yan, 2010). See Fig. 1.1.



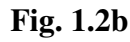
Fig. 1.1: A scenes taken from the first series of *Cursive Trilogy, the cursive*, one of a typified example demonstrating how the dancer uses her body as a metaphor to ‘write’ the Chinese character ‘永’ (‘eternity’)

1.3 Choreographical notation

In my own work, I began my first experiment by sorting out some of the musical as well as choreographical ideas and reformulating them into a kind of fragmented hybrid notation. My intention, however, is neither to create nor invent a new choreographical musical notation, but to use my musical experience and knowledge as a strategy for discovering the plausible potential relationship between language, sound, and movement in how choreographic ideas can be translated into musical ideas and vice versa. I wanted to find representations of visual and sounding elements as a creative way to open up, navigate, and unfold the collaborative dialogue in this project. I took a Chinese poem titled ‘贡(貢)。抗’ written by Chong Kee Xin and fragmented its characters to create an invented choreographical notation (Fig. 1.2 [a-b]) for Tang to read and work with.



Fig. 1.2a



The score, whose components look more or less like familiar Western musical notation, includes different ranges of dynamic marks together with a four-line musical staff. Each line indicates the approximate registers and positions (from low [on floor] to high [jumping]) that the body should execute, arrows to show changes in position, breathing indications, acceleration markings, and fermatas, and these musical components were used by Tang as the basis for directing and creating her physical movements and gestures. These fragmented scores are the basis of the work's emergent structural form and meaning, which were then further reformulated, fragmented, and re-joined, appearing later in different sizes to create new choreographic patterns, phrases, and passages creating multiple relationships from a micro to macro level (Fig. 1.3 [a-b]).

different logical models: language, sound, and movement. Each of these, however, fuse together rather like a ‘chord’ or a ‘cluster’ rather than projecting as a ‘single-tone’ concept.

My intention was neither to form a style nor constrain movement but to create a situation for stimulating the movement of creative imagination through a process of ‘re-learning’. The structure as well as process of working with the notation was quite flexible due to the openness and ambiguity of the material itself. After a brief description through communication, there were no further explanations indicated in these initial fragmented-scores. Tang started her first experiment by re-imagining and transforming her body and movement like a Chinese calligraphic brushstroke to ‘read’ and ‘write’ the score as a series of tracings. However, because the original meaning, context, and logical structure of the Chinese character had been disrupted, the structure of these new forms of the characters gave rise to passages of activity whose interior ‘pillars between the joins’ seemed to offer new insights into the meaning of the poem. In other words, in order to access the information of these new Chinese characters, Tang and I had to learn seemingly familiar words in a new way.

Tang’s approach was to reorganize my sketch fragments of a dance notation into her own version, which she wrote out on A3 size paper (Fig. 1.4). What I found particularly interesting about her sketch is the way in which she created an interlocked relationship amongst the characters by weaving together the units. She therefore expanded the complexity of the connections and the networking between the elements of the score fragments that I had provided. Her sketch, which then replaced my first notations as the reference score, became the central medium for communicating our developing ideas for navigating our later discussion and negotiation.

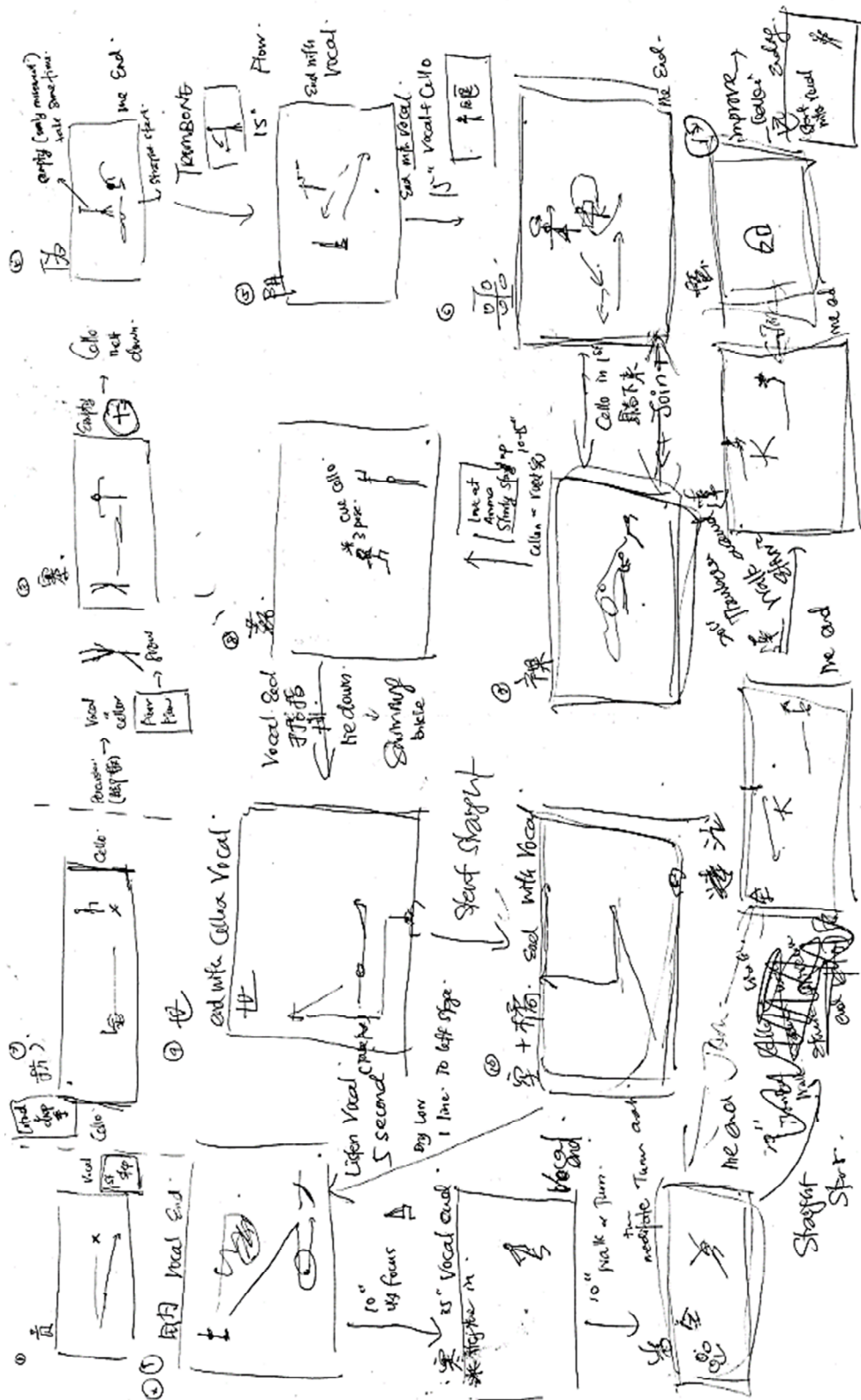


Fig. 1.4: One of the early sketches illustrating how Tang translated and reformulated her choreographical ideas from the notation I created

1.4 Creating a gong installation

At the centre of the work is a set of 52 *Kadazandusun* traditional gongs, new and old, of different sizes and with different tunings, which are suspended throughout the performance space (Fig. 1.5 [a/b]).



Fig. 1.5a: The final appearance setting of the gong installation

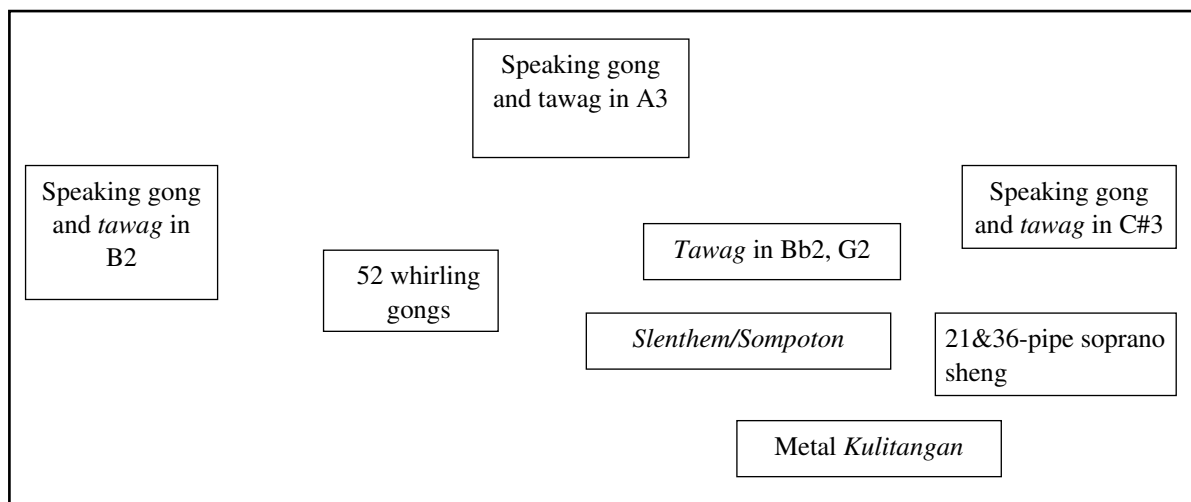


Fig. 1.5b: Diagram of distribution of gongs

Two dancers and three musicians move through this gong installation. The musicians are set at the right-hand side of the space. Each musician plays different instruments and also moves in the space performing with the dancers. The distribution of instruments is as follows:

Performer 1:

2 gongs in Bb2 and G2 (behind the *slenthem*), 2 gongs (speaking gong and normal *tawag* in c#3), *slenthem* pentatonic in C2, *sompoton* (traditional *kadazandusun* bamboo mouth organ).

Performer 2:

21-pipe soprano sheng and 36-pipe soprano sheng.

Performer 3:

2 gongs (speaking gong and normal *tawag* B2), metal *kulintangan*.

One of the dancers also plays together with the musicians in the fifth section [the dance solo]:

2 gongs A3 (speaking gong and one normal *tawag*).



Fig. 1.6: The ensemble and the musicians playing on the right of the stage

The gong can be considered the most important musical element symbolizing the core of the musical culture among the Indigenous people of the Malaysian and Indonesian archipelago – what the German ethnomusicologist Abels calls ‘the so-called gong-chime belt of Southeast Asia’ (Abels, 2015, p. 33).⁶ My journey in this particular project, however, can be traced to the discovery of what I called the ‘speaking gong’: a very unique set of traditional *Kadazandusun* gongs with complex and mobile sounds found in a costume storeroom at the University of Malaysia, Sabah (Fig. 1.7).

⁶ Abels (2015) discusses how dance and gongs are an essential core for people to maintain their cultural identity. There is an experience of cultural self-recognition through movement and music whereby people retrieve personal/cultural memory through the ‘encapsulated cultural signal’ of the gong while the movement of the dance serves as a compass by which one navigates the people back to a cultural ‘home’.



Fig. 1.7: The three speaking gongs

There is nothing extraordinary about these gongs at first sight. Although they were new, most were out of tune; the design of these instruments is similar to other gongs except that these three are profoundly exceptional and unpredictable in their sound. It seems to me that these gongs had been stored because of their faulty distorted sound, but this was exactly what fascinated me as a composer. I immediately wanted to explore how to transform these ‘failures’. These three gongs produced a very interesting multiphonic texture projecting a two-dimensional musical layer simultaneously, including a sustained tone and a glissando tone (from low to high). The glissandi of each gong are quite flexible and adjustable in their interval within a range of approximately a minor third, determined by the dynamic level with which they are played. For instance, the smallest of these three gongs is called *sanang* in *Kadazandusun* language produces an approximate end pitch of A3 with a minor 3rd glissando effect starting from F#3. The proximity of this interval depends on the dynamic; the louder the gong is played, the wider the interval. When the gong is played even more loudly, it will produce a C#5 pitch, which sounds together with the changing tone (Fig. 1.8).

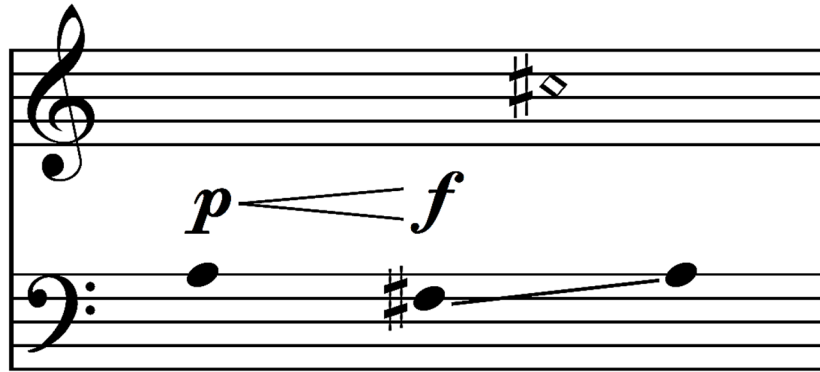


Fig. 1.8: The musical texture created by the *sanang*

In order to revitalize the faulty identity of these speaking gongs, I reviewed and formulated the traditional concepts of the gongs' identity and functions as follows. Firstly, the gong is an object to produce sound and used to provoke a sense of one's cultural identity, especially as a stimulus for tuning one's imagination in the live performance of ritual. Secondly, without further discussing the detail about the complexity of the gong's spectral structure, despite the exceptional cases of the three speaking gongs with their complex effects, each gong basically represents a single unit of sound which only forms part of a motive, or pattern when played in an ensemble. This principle is found in most of the Southeast Asia region, especially in gamelan music. In most of these traditional gong repertoires, highly complex musical textures are created by using interlocking techniques to create different patterns, textures, and layers as the foundation of the musical practice. Thirdly, the physical mobility of the gong is limited. Since the gong functions primarily as an accompanying musical instrument, basically, its location on the stage is fixed, and there is generally no physical movement with the instrument.

To break down the barriers, as I started to become more aware of the relationship and the impact of the entanglement between the instruments and the performers within a performance stage, I sought to remodel the image of these gongs by re-considering the meaning of their spatiality and identity, and by re-positioning them. This notion of thinking the gongs as part of the body of the stage instead of as instruments, moving from an

‘ensemble’ to a ‘stage’, eventually led me to the direction of creating a gong installation which then became an essential element of the articulation of the space through which the dialogue of the creativity of our collaboration unfolded. My first approach was to unlock the gongs from a traditionally static position by rethinking the gong as a living object instead of just an accompaniment to dance performance.

Aside from the three speaking gongs, we collected 52 different new and old *kulintangan*⁷. Each of these gongs was then distributed and hung in the room to articulate architectural space, forming a kind of ‘body’ with which the dancers and musicians could interact. Suspended in the space, they created a visually spectacular mobile environment for the performers in which either side of the gong can be sounded and the sound dispersed by swinging and spinning the gongs (Fig. 1.9). These whirling *kulintangan* take on a very expressive life and seem to ‘speak’ with many inflections of sound in the space.



Fig. 1.9: The whirling *kulintangan*

⁷ *Kadazandusun* traditional gongs, one of the popular percussive instruments found especially throughout South East Asia, are used in sets to play melodies.

The positioning of the musicians and the speaking gongs was inspired by the spatial arrangement of furniture, scrolls, and Chinese calligraphic couplets in traditional Chinese interior design (Fig. 1.10).



Fig. 1.10: Sketching the gongs' positions on stage based on the arrangement of the Chinese audience chamber

This interior architectural concept derived from the form of the Chinese traditional audience chamber (Fig. 1.11), which was adopted to form the installation's outer structure by coupling each speaking gong with another *tawag*, hanging and placing them on the barre at different corners (on the left, middle, and right side) of the stage (Fig. 1.5). This arrangement was used to harmonize and incorporate the forces between the positive and the negative energies within the stage, represented and generated by the musicians and the dancers.

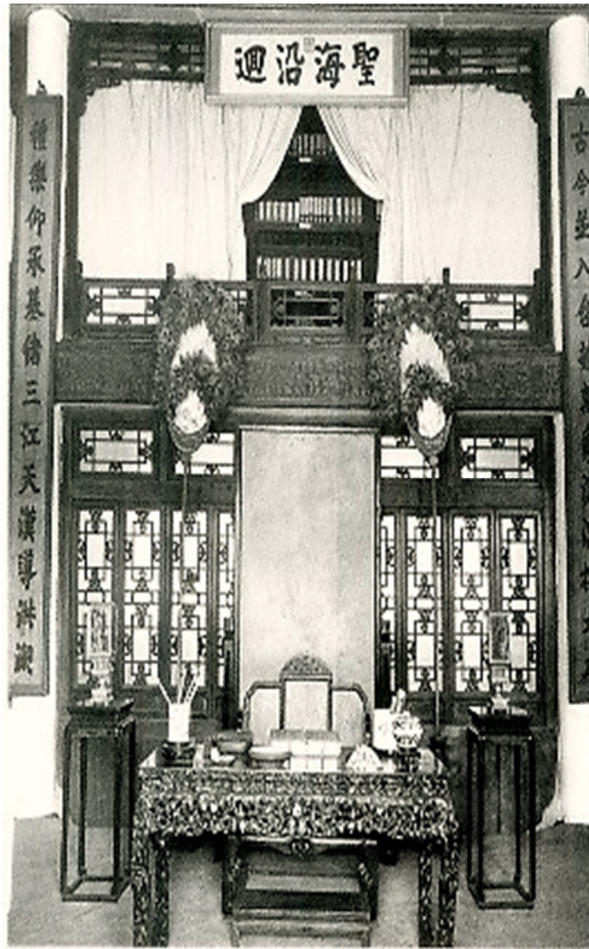


Fig. 1.11: Wen-su-Ko library, Ch'ing dynasty, 1782, interior view of audience chamber, Shen-yang, Liaoning. From *Chung-Kuo mei shu ch'üan-chi, chien-chu i-shu pien*, vol. 1, *Kung-tien chien-chu* (Peking: Chung-Kuo chien-chu kung-yeh ch'u-she 1987), pl.153 (Carey, 1999).

In response to Ingold's discussion of how one's experiences, knowledge, and creativity are accumulated and shaped organically by the changing context of the environment, and to deepen my transcultural understanding through exchange, I invited musicians to participate in the process of making music together with the dancers in a sequence of workshops. Over time, this implementation gradually formed a reciprocal relationship, in which I strongly experienced a kind of alchemical exchange as dancers and musicians started experimenting by assimilating each other's performative embodiment. This, as the pictures in Fig. 1.12 (a-d) show, was especially so in one of our sessions when Tang experimented with her choreography by using the surface of the body of the *kulintang* to create different platforms.



Fig. 1.12a



Fig. 1.12b



Fig. 1.12c



Fig. 1.12d

Tang selected five different *kulintangan* with different pitches, placed them on the floor, and started dancing on the instruments. While moving and adjusting the spaces between each instrument, the limited surface of the instruments led her to experience different body movements and affected the way she choreographed her dance. Through my observation, this choreographic activity then seemed to transfer into the musicians' bodies.

For example, one of the musicians who played the metal *kulintangan* seemed to have applied this 'skill' in their musical performance practice. During the working process, she assimilated Tang's experimental behaviour and her choreography into her practice, using beaters to rub across the surface of the metal plates in a circular motion whilst moving and changing the positions of the metal *kulintangan* to create different forms of modes (Fig. 1.13) with which her musical material in the later live performance is associated. As the pitch order of the instrument was constantly re-organized throughout the performance, it created interesting musical patterns and textures, a ripple-like effect between pitches and noises just as Tang created noises as she adjusted the gongs on the floor.

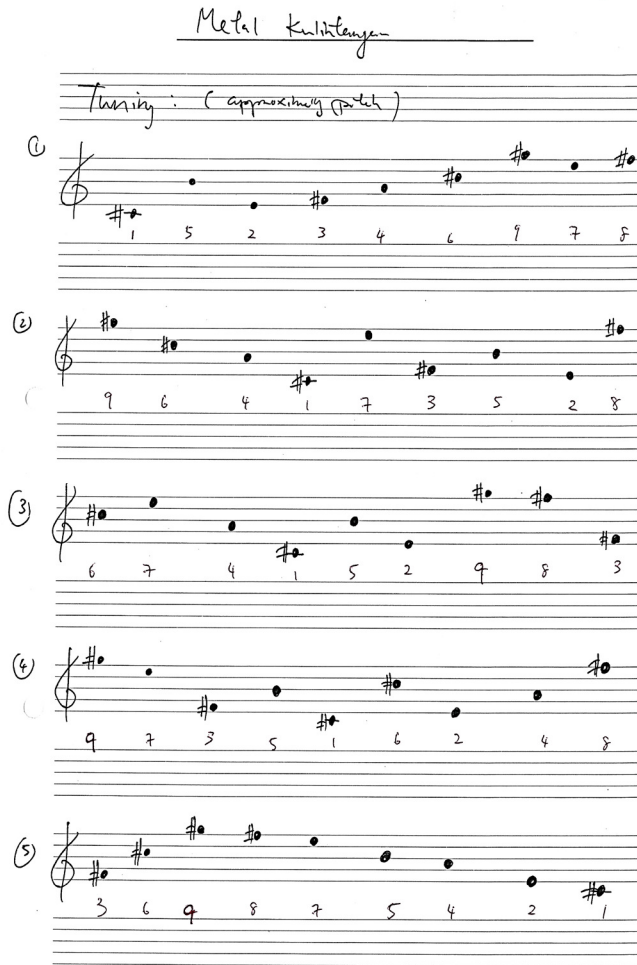


Fig. 1.13: A sketch illustrating the different modes played by the metal *kulitangan* as the gongs are moved into different positions

From these collaborative workshops, I created a constellation of musical events and decided to weave all the findings, experiences, and knowledge I had discovered and learnt throughout the working process by staging a performance to broaden the surface between my artistic perception and physical experience. For the finished work, I staged the reciprocal relationship of elements to unfold the musical as well as choreographical activities of the previous workshop stages. This allows the performers to generate and operate the vocabularies between sound and the movement in a live situation, and so further unlock and open up the conversations between all these elements. I did this without assigning any written specification or using a musical score but through a process of exchange incorporating ideas

from all participants using words, notes, and sketched diagrams. This communication greatly enriched real-time performance reactions from the performers.

The structural form of the 23-minute performance-installation piece can be divided into seven sections indicated with different themes with an approximate timeline (Fig. 1.14).

First event (*4mins)	Second event (*1min)	Third event (*4mins)	Fourth event (*4mins)	Fifth event (*5mins)	Sixth event (*6mins)
(**00:00)	(**03:30)	(**04:30)	(**08:40)	(**12:36)	(**17:10)
The opening	Tracing the mark of the space and the spacing within the stage	The whirling <i>kulintangan</i>	Choral section	The dialogue between the speaking gongs, dancer, and sheng	The conversation between the whirling <i>kulintangan</i>

Fig. 1.14: (*) each event's total approximate duration () approx. starting time in the video**

In terms of form, these events are not meant to be designed for rigidity or for restrictive purposes but were a means of creating a situation to navigate amongst multiple voices in this project where performers could express themselves and correspond with others within an open interactive space. While structuring these events, I also chose to unfold the dialogue between the dancers, the musicians, and the gong installation in a more flexible way, allowing a certain freedom of choice for the performers to channel and strengthen their ideas and energy easily through these activities, although there are several fixed choreographic events between the sections. In a sense, the stage itself was treated as an opened-ended score: the movements, sounds, and energies become part of the materials – components or parameters within the notation. In other words, the stage can be seen as a ‘moving’ score. Although each event in the diagram above appears to be a discrete structure with a strong narrative form, my idea is that these musical events are not meant to be separated but should

be seen as comprising a whole within which the energies articulated and shared between the events are interconnected. During the performance, each performer has to observe and listen to how others contribute and elicits reactions. This idea was inspired by the first score I made for Tang in which I wanted to bring a notion of symbiosis to how elements and people relate underlying a mutual sense of understated, implied conversation.

The first event provokes a sense of 'in-betweenness', of crossing worlds between static and non-static states. A feeling of past, present, and future co-existing through breathing, waiting, and moving can be considered the prelude in this performance. The opening with the *kulintangan* and the *slethem* creating a long duet passage with bow whilst the dancers remain still. Following this is a long canon-like choreographic passage created by the dancers, projecting sometimes mirroring/symmetrical patterns as well as traditional *kadazandusun* choreographic gestures combined with movements crafted from the earlier sections. This choreographic pattern, interpenetrated with a sometimes improvisational language, is articulated using breathing as the synchronizing factor. The performers adjust their body rhythm, energy, and articulation during the performance (Fig. 1.15).



Fig. 1.15: A scene taken from the beginning of the first event capturing the moment in which the dancers use their breathing as a signal for communication purposes during the performance

Through this, the dance creates signals for the musicians who respond with a rather slow, calm, meditative sort of musical situation and atmosphere. Begun and led by the dancers, the second event is a short transition to the following section in which the dancers freely criss-crossed the stage without touching the instruments. The dancers proceeded by transforming their body movements, imitating the gestural movement of the twirling gong, using the spaces in-between the whirling gongs hung on the stage accompanied by an intermittent repetitive pattern of sounds created by the sheng (Fig. 1.16).



Fig. 1.16: A scene from the second event portraying the moment how the dancer assimilated the movement of the whirling gongs into their physical body

This activity will be terminated slowly in the later passage as the performers shift to the beginning of the third event, which begins with a story-telling-like situation in which the performers transform their bodies into gongs and start making contact with them by holding them and covering their face with them like a mask whilst reciting a short poem about the *kadazandusun* creation story (Fig. 1.17).



Fig. 1.17: A scene showing the dancers reciting poems to the *kulintangan* about the *kadazandusun* creation story

Having been twisted in the air after the recitation, each spinning whirling gong here creates an interesting visual effect resonating to the live music created from the ensemble as if they were speaking, talking, and interacting with others. This interactive activity creating a sense of confusion resulting in an interesting spatial effect with energies intertwined between the visual, sonic, and kinetic elements throughout the process in which the intensity of the music from the ensemble as well as the dynamism of gongs on the stage are gradually raised to the extent where the dancers started speeding up their activity.

The fourth event extended the performers' voices, creating a ritual-ceremonial atmosphere, by bringing the musicians onto the stage with the dancers to perform, interact, explore, and operate different sound worlds within the gong installation, enriching and bridging their performances by creating an imaginary 'choir' (Fig. 1.18).



Fig. 1.18

Each performer continually imitated and responded to the sounds on the stage freely and in a more personal and imaginative way. Although the order was not fully restricted and was left to the preference of the performer, the procedure was that while playing or making a sound, whilst choosing and playing the instrument on stage, each performer had to re-imagine the instrument's sound that either they or the others created and recreate this with their voices.

The fifth event provokes a very strong local ritual sense of performance, forming an imaginary 'trio' setting inspired by the architectural setting and bringing the dance and musical dialogue onto the stage with a solo dancer and a sheng player (Fig. 1.19).

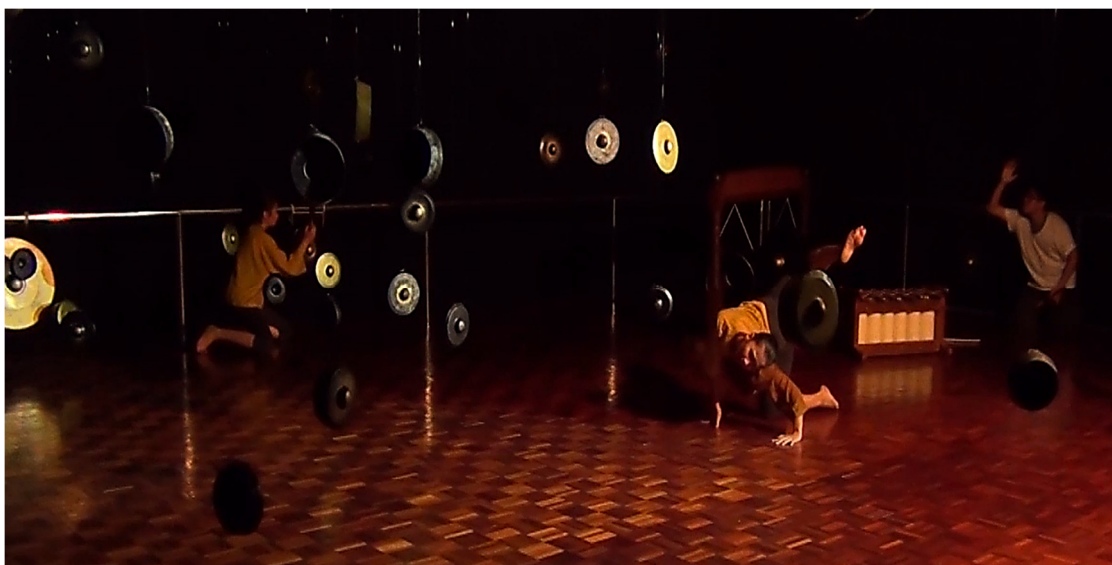


Fig. 1.19

This gong trio, led by one of the musicians acting like a conductor, creates a murmuring speech or chant-like conversation that is shaped and intercut by a sometimes interlocking rhythmic pattern. It is performed in an improvisational manner whilst continually corresponding and integrating indirectly and intermittently with others elements, including the dance solo and the music played by the sheng player. This spatial idea, pairing elements of Chinese interior architecture and musical elements, and formed by the positioning of instruments and performer at opposing positions in the room, shows another example of how I integrated and extended the hybrid elements into my work.

The last section is a finale in which some of the previous materials and activities, including the ‘canon’ pattern of choreography at the opening as well as the scene of twisting gongs, are recapitulated. The highlight of this section, however, was the conversation that the whirling gongs themselves created by chance (Fig. 1.20).



Fig. 1.20

This happened during a moment of accidental contact between the whirling gongs, starting from approximate 17:10, when one of the musicians joining the stage action started to move the whirling *kulintang* one by one freely across the stage. With so much movement on stage, the *kulintang* would sometimes accidentally come into contact with each other or one

of the performers. The resulting chance elements created an interesting situation in which the whirling *kulintangan* on stage seemed to be talking not only to other *kulintangan* but also to be interacting with the dancers and the music from the ensemble as equal partners, echoing sound and movement with an irregular dialogue of contrapuntal textures.

This constellation of musical activities engaging with musical and choreographical elements through collaboration has given me an opportunity to experience the practice and the power of cultural exchange. It has provided me with a deeper understanding of the holistic interconnectivity between my work and others and how the collaboration forms and hybridizes material. One of the challenges that I have encountered throughout the exchange especially during the improvisational performance was that although this notion of intercultural exchange seemed ideal as a ‘passport’ to cross into another territory to gain knowledge for my work, the result of the exchange itself in fact seemed to be pushing me towards an unknown place that does not belong to any particular party but itself. This confusion happened especially during the live, improvisational performance when we barely explained which material had we contributed or borrowed from others. This led me to the next step of questioning what sort of musical surface I should be looking and focusing on; what sort of dialogue should be held, delivered, and presented; and how should I, as a composer, respond to these in my musical works through musical notation.

Chapter 2: Transcultural exchange

The transculture lies both inside and outside all existing cultures...the transcultural world is a unity of all cultures and noncultures, that is, of those possibilities that have not yet been realized. (Epstein, 2009, p. 33)

Transcultural studies as a field of inquiry does not employ one particular approach or subscribe to one specific methodology. It is a way of seeing and opening up the world. Transcultural literary interpretation focuses first and foremost on literary texts which are rich sources for the creation of meaning. (Martinson, 2016, p. 1)

This chapter explores the practice of how cultural exchange can be instilled and activated in musical contexts. Its first half covers three works of mine starting with *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, and continuing with *Re-sketch(es)*, and *Re-sketch(es) II – resurrection*. Each of these pieces works with fairly different musical ideas and formations, but through the discussion I demonstrate the lineage of how various musical ideas are fragmented, re-shaped, and evolved using musical notation as a tool to work with materials in rather more abstract, subjective, and personal ways than previously. The second half of this chapter reflects on examples from other composers, and here my contextual choices centre on how one can raise one's artistic awareness towards values of cultural difference when integrating intercultural materials. The central focus will concentrate on the process of my personal musical/compositional practice rather than defining, justifying, or criticizing the distinctions between musicological terms and frameworks.

To deal with cultural complexity through exchange with people from different backgrounds and communities, I started my research by looking at the distinction between prefix terms used to describe exchange, for instance 'inter', 'multi', and 'trans' (or 'cross')

(Marotta, 2014, pp.90–102). These terminologies have been explored by scholars, especially from anthropological, philosophical, and sociological areas, and have been used to (re)formulate distinctions between parties from different cultural backgrounds and communities, touching on the study of attitudes, characteristics, and the evolution of cultural hybrids or ‘in-between subjects’ at different stages and levels (Park, 1919; Reuter, 1917, 1927; Trumbull, 1896; Van Gennep, 1960). In my practice, I have preferred the word ‘transcultural’ coined by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in his book *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar: Contemporary Versions of Transculturalism* (1947) as most strongly resonant with my thinking and hence I have used it throughout the discussion in this chapter. One important idea that he pinned down using this term is a double-edged phenomenon that is both enabling and destructive. As Bronislaw Malinowski says in his introduction to Ortiz’s text, transculturalism

is a process in which both parts of the equation are modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex, a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, not even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, *original and independent...*it is an exchange between two cultures, both of them active, *both contributing their share*, and *both co-operating* to bring about a new reality of civilization. (Malinowski, 1947, p. xi)

Malinowski’s description implies that such contact is a cooperative exchange. In other words, transcultural exchange, unlike other kinds of exchange, does not mean assimilation into another culture but the reconstruction of a new form of identity in an equally active situation beyond the surface of both territories. My focus in relation to this discussion of transcultural subject matter, however, does not primarily emphasize a justification or critique of anthropological studies or even necessarily the advantages and disadvantages of which methods, modalities, and aesthetics might be more beneficial than the others. I am neither

establishing a specific paradigm nor suggesting the most appropriate practical framework, but looking for clues from various sociological examples that can act as guides for my work and future research. Instead of drawing upon the differences between the anthropological literatures, I wanted to find my way towards a new musical identity beyond discussions about authenticity of surface that often arise around exchange processes.

2.1 *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*

Epstein, as quoted above (2009, p. 33), delineates a fascinating clue for thinking about transcultural thinking. He characterizes the tendency of a transcultural world towards traits of its ‘trans’ element that is inclined towards an ‘unknown zone’, something that is yet to be discovered and explored. Guilherme and Dietz said that: ‘This is where the interaction between different cultures can transcend not only their borders but also their interstices’ (Guilherme & Dietz, 2015, p. 8). It is a process that ‘Entails an awareness of the multiple timescales on which the discourse unfolds and an ability to capitalize on the layered simultaneity of various historical discourses operating in the present’ (Kramsch & Uryu, 2012, p. 223). In other words, there is a new emerging world involving a highly intensified interactivity that has yet to be revealed in which different states, forces, and cultures are interconnected, shared, and interpenetrated through temporal and cultural spaces. In order to open up and access this ‘unknown zone’ and this kind of alchemical effect of exchange whose result is a permeation between and beyond differences, one must move beyond the surface level of appearances to arrive at a newly emerging ‘world’.

To dive into this uncanny world, I started my first experiments by transferring aspects of experiences with the previous gong installation and regenerating them into a musical notation. To reconstruct the previous activities in a notational formation that would express how I experienced and wove together the musical ideas in *Interbreathment*, I chose to remodel and unfold the musical dialogues within a more flexible yet abstract structure. I did

this by reimagining the interactive-gong space of *Interbreathment* as being like a ‘room’ in which I embedded a gong ensemble into a Western ensemble setting (Fig. 2.1).⁸



Fig. 2.1: The actual instrumental setting during the second performance held in Ghent

This gong ensemble embedded within the ensemble is intended to act like the previous gong installation as a kind of architectural space that shapes the performance. As with the installation work, the gongs are imagined as if they were suspended presences between which the instrumentalists weave a dance. For me, the gongs in *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh* function by bringing into play a set of ‘double-edged forces’ in the way they sustain, project, and articulate presence and absence through their resonances. Performance activity in the writing for Western instruments is juxtaposed against the slower moving temporal structure of the gong events, and I tried to work with ways in which the gongs would not only reinforce the musical surfaces but also activate dynamisms in the physical staging of the

⁸ *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh* was premiered by the Ensemble Discord Workshop at The University of Huddersfield, St. Paul’s Hall on 24th March 2014, and in Ghent, Belgium, on 17th April 2014. This project was a student-initiated collaboration between composers from The University of Huddersfield and performers of Discord Ensemble (students from the Manama programme, an advanced Masters course in solo contemporary performance at Ghent Conservatory, Belgium, together with Ictus Ensemble (Brussels) and Spectra Ensemble.

ensemble. At the same time, I was also interested in creating a two-dimensional layering of materials that continually cross and exchange on both sonic and visual levels.

The piece can be divided into five sections (Fig. 2.2).

Section	1	2	3	4	5
Bars	1-42	43-71	72-78	79-92	93-102
Rehearsal Mark	A-D	E	F	G-H	I
Musical Event	Introduction	Repetitive musical pattern	Gong ensemble performance	Double bass solo	Finale
Gong interaction	gong and instrument playing	without gong	without musical instrument	gong and instrument playing	gong and instrument playing

Fig. 2.2: The formal structure of *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*

Each section consists of different ranges of musical events with and without gongs. They are strongly interconnected through repeated rhythmic patterns, pitches, and articulations in overlapping phrases that echo one another.

The first section presents a highly interactive form of musical activities between the gong and instrumental playing where the accents between pitches, harmonics, and noises are constantly articulated within a compulsive rhythmic framework. These rhythmic phrases are folded into different sound qualities by a repeatedly interchanging, assimilating, and resolving manner of musical phrasing. The second section creates a contrast by confining and channeling the previous energies into a long semi-quaver repetitive musical pattern operating between open strings and overtones executed by the double bass, as a motive to unfold the entire dialogue in this section. The third section, by contrast, creates a ritual atmosphere by revealing the gong ensemble in a rather slow, static, and meditative atmosphere. Quickly following the gong ensemble section is the double bass solo in which the musician assimilates the shifting sonorities of the Chinese zither, the guqin, accompanied sometimes by the horn, piano, and gong in a question–answer dialogue. The last section could be

regarded as a short finale recapitulating some of the previous sonorities where the double bass creates an echo of the gongs with a very low murmuring tone, playing on the tailpiece and also imitating the opening long murmuring passage created by the horn.

Instead of designing a systematic model to structure and form the musical parameters, I used a rhythmic template, found in section three of the work (Fig. 2.3), to form, develop, and reinforce the interrelationship between the materials and sections.

The musical score for *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bars 72-75, is presented for four parts: S. Gong, L. Gong, M. Gong, and L. Gong. The score is marked with a box 'F' and a tempo of 36. The S. Gong part features a 5:4 triplet and a 7:4 triplet. The L. Gong part features a 3:2 triplet and a 7:4 triplet. The M. Gong part features a 3:2 triplet and a 7:4 triplet. The L. Gong part features a 3:2 triplet and a 7:4 triplet. Dynamics include p, mf, pp, and sfz. The score is marked with a box 'F' and a tempo of 36.

Fig. 2.3: *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bar 72-75

This template comprises different musical patterns, impulses, and note values, including triplets, quintuplets, and septuplets situated within a common time. I distributed these fragments across the piece to function as a ‘navigator’ around which I could form and further develop other musical parameters across the piece. This was not always the case, however, due to the fact that some of the materials translated individually, in terms of their sound world, were actually taken from my experience of the previous installation work. In any case, since the interconnectivity between the sounds and the activities within the piece is meant to be formed in organic rather than mechanistic ways, the function of these musical templates was not so much to determine the musical parameters but, most importantly, to ‘purpose’ the materials as well as activities. Taking the first template from bar 72 and 73 for example, I transferred this into the opening section to form a larger scope of space by augmenting its form from four units to a 9/4 bar (Fig. 2.4).

Interfusion V-A Song for Herh (2014)

For horn, piano, violin, five string double bass
Dedicated to ensemble Discord Workshop and Zhong Herh

Chie Tsang LEE

$\text{♩} = 40$
unstable, like murmuring
pedal note

Horn in F
Small Gong
Piano
Large Gong
Violin
Medium Gong
Five-String Double Bass
Large Gong

Fig. 2.4: *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bar 1

The first beat of the original template now resides at the first and fifth beat, functioning as a signifier to elicit the other musical parts. Out of this downbeat signal, I elaborate the rhythmic material in the horn part by creating a long murmuring passage with a low E together with the large gong (played by pianist) and accompanied by string duet passages beginning at the fourth beat. The string passages were actually derived from *Interbreathment*: I have taken the long duet created by the *kulintangan* and the *slenthem* passages at the beginning of that performance and re-orchestrated the musical gestures and sonic behaviour into the violin and the five-string double bass part. This new string duet, centralizing a double octave interval on B \flat , appears with a fairly different musical texture and spectrum of qualities moving between normal to harmonic timbres. Such sonic behaviour is recapitulated in the first section and becomes more complex by forming interlocking dialogues between the gong and the instruments. This can be seen, for instance, in bar 3 (Fig. 2.5), in which the previous rhythmic structure of the string passage has been compacted and separated into different musical

patterns, intertwined with the gong accompaniment executed by the horn and piano, crossing and overlapping in different registers and articulations together with glissandi and natural harmonics situated within a 7/4 time signature.

Fig. 2.5: Interfusion V – A Song for Herh, bar 3

Another element from the installation that can be traced in this piece is the use of ‘breathing’ for communication and synchronization purposes during the live performance. This ‘breathing’ material, however, functions in the current piece more like a signal that I associate with controlling the dynamic forces between tension and release. For example, at bar 8 (Fig. 2.6), I created a cohesive accent by assembling the musicians to form a short attack between the passages in which the violinist articulates his breathing whilst sustaining and transferring this cohesiveness with left-hand pizzicato just as the dancers in *Interbreathment* synchronized their movement with others by using their breathing whilst sustaining and bringing their energy to the next activity.

Fig. 2.6: Interfusion V – A Song for Herh, bar 7-8

Such material has been further manipulated in the following passage in bar 24, for example, by extending the passage in a larger form, to expand the musical texture by which the breathing articulation has been re-orchestrated to strengthen the interconnection between the materials. Throughout the passage, this particular musical gesture has been further developed by constantly changing different voicings of pitch materials between the horn, violin, and piano whilst the double bass creates a background with different forms of articulation including natural harmonics, trills, and tremolos (Fig. 2.7).

The musical score for *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bars 24-27, is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 24-25) includes parts for Horn (Hn.), L. Gong, Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). The second system (bars 26-27) adds the Piano (Pno.) part. The score is marked with a tempo of 60 and a key signature of one flat. Various musical notations are used, including dynamics (p, mf, f, ff), articulations (trills, tremolos), and performance instructions like 'back to instrument' and 'to gong'. The Vln. part features a complex melodic line with trills and tremolos, while the Db. part provides a harmonic foundation with natural harmonics and trills. The Pno. part includes a chromatic cluster and a sostenuto pedal effect.

Fig. 2.7: *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bar 24-27

One of the central sonic behaviours layered across the piece is the switching transformation between two different sound qualities using the relationship between the fundamental note and its harmonics. This sonic behaviour already occurs in the first section in the strings' trilled pitches between the fundamental note and its harmonics across the open string. This shifting manner is remodelled later by the double bassist, who uses his voice to create a

Mongolian overtone singing style while maintaining the fundamental note on the instrument (Fig. 2.8).

Fig. 2.8: *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bar 20-21

This double-edged sonic behaviour is also transferred into a long, repetitive sixteenth note musical pattern (Fig. 2.9).

Fig. 2.9: *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bar 43

The character of this sonic fluctuation, however, has been changed, bringing an even rhythmic quality. The fluctuating sonic spectrum is created by constantly articulating the string whilst adjusting the bow's pressure and its position between the bridge and the fingerboard on the open string. This creates a Jew's-harp multiphonic-like musical texture. This simple musical pattern, which begins at bar 43, is used to form a larger scale of more complex musical textures from a micro to macro level by gradually inviting other musical instruments starting from bar 57 until 67 (Fig. 2.10), ending with the horn solo at the fermata of bar 71.

Fig. 2.10: *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, bar 56-59

After the entry of the double bass, the horn, the violin, then the piano follow, each of which holds a repeated musical pattern. Instead of repeating the same musical pattern, however, each line has been slightly adjusted, decorated with flourishes in different registers and with different techniques, dynamics, and articulations.

The sense of fragility is extended at section G, where the double bass starts playing pizzicato with a glass slide on the string to imitate the glissando effect of the guqin. This is one of the places in the work with a more direct link to a specifically Chinese performance practice and is part of ongoing explorations of the world of guqin performance and music as a cultural model for organizing sound and silence (Fig. 2.11 [a-b]).

26

G

$\text{♩} = 40$

S. Gong $\text{H } \frac{6}{4}$ pp

L. Gong $\text{H } \frac{6}{4}$ pp

M. Gong $\text{H } \frac{6}{4}$ pp

Db. $\text{H } \frac{6}{4}$ mf f $3-2^{\flat}$ f $7-4^{\flat}$ $m.v$ f $7-4^{\flat}$ f $3-2^{\flat}$ $m.v$ mf $3-2^{\flat}$

(give cue)

pizz.

ff

$m.v$

mf

Fig. 2.11a: Interfusion V – A Song for Herh, bar 79-81

H

like 'Gu Qin' playing
 $\text{♩} = 40$ freely, calm

85

Db. $\text{H } \frac{6}{4}$ f $3-2^{\flat}$ f $7-4^{\flat}$ f $7-4^{\flat}$ mf f $7-4^{\flat}$ f $3-2^{\flat}$ f $3-2^{\flat}$

pizz. (with glass bottle)

II

I

(the given notes indicate the approximate position of the pitch)

27

Fig. 2.11b: Interfusion V – A Song for Herh, bar 85

2.2 Re-sketch(es): Sketches as maps

Maps are graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, condition, processes, or events in the human world. (Harley and Woodward, 1987, pg. xvi)

From the Greeks to Google Earth, it is not in the nature of maps meaningfully to change anything. Instead, maps offer arguments and propositions; they define, recreate, shape and mediate. Invariably, they also fail to reach their objectives. (Brotton, 2012, pg. 16)

In the summer of 2014, I participated in the 5th Atlas Lab organized by the Atlas Academy at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, a two-week summer course at which invited musicians, composers, and musicologists could explore potential musical dialogues between 'West' and 'East'. One of the excitements of participating in this summer course was that each composer had an opportunity to explore a very specific ensemble combination of Eastern and Western musical instruments and was able to work closely with musicians

from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities including China, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. In my project, I was assigned to work with a highly unusual instrumentation made up of duduk, shakuhachi, shō, Chinese traditional soprano sheng, guzheng, erhu, and cello. I found it very difficult to work with such a highly diverse instrumentation and with musicians who were not all necessarily familiar or comfortable with Western musical notation. This challenge led to questions relating to notation and the level of determination needed, to the role of ambiguity as a musical value, and the balance of authority in judging stable and unstable elements in the makeup of the score. Such questions were key to how I thought about the project. That is, how could I find a common language for exchange when the musicians came from such different musical traditions and practices? What could I learn from composing with more open forms?

Finding a way to reconcile these cultural differences, I was highly aware of the boundaries of the various musicians' cultural territory. To bring these musicians together without losing their values, cultures, and musical practices, and somehow not compromise these within a contemporary musical sound world, my strategy was to create a platform for holding a cultural dialogue for the players to interact through music. I wanted to avoid creating a competitive situation where the musicians are encountered as exotic examples. My response was to create a score with more open and graphical elements like a sketch so as to facilitate the musical exchange (Fig. 2.12).

for duduk(s), shakuhachi, shō, soprano sheng, guzheng, erhu, cello

Dedicated to Atlas Ensemble

*circular bow, constantly adjusting the bow position to create different qualities of timbre.

Chie Tsang LEE

Fig. 2.12: *Re-sketch(es)* the first page of the score

My sketch was to be a type of map, a navigational tool for the performers both in terms of how they could move across the musical space in time and as a source of clues for musical behaviours within that space. The distinction between the finished result and the process of the action was something I played with in making the work.

The piece, is formed of three different parts separated by three tuning sessions located at the beginning of each part (Fig. 2.13).

First part (page one)					
1 st tuning session					
Rehearsal marks	A		B		C
Musical event	Trio between duduk, shakuhachi, and guzheng		Changing musical texture moving from standard tone quality to harmonic tone quality		Subdivided- interaction (indicated by the arrows): contrapuntal musical dialogues created through individual improvisation
Second part (page two and three)					
2 nd tuning session					
Rehearsal marks	D	E	F	G	H
Musical event	Single-note transformation	A short transitional melody created by duduk	A dramatic transitional passage consisting of a wide range of registers, speeds, articulations and musical textures.		Layers and textures sustained in the high register
Third part (page four)					
3 rd tuning session					
Rehearsal marks	I		J		K
Musical event	Duet between duduk, shakuhachi		Recapitulation of single-note transformation		Changing the tone quality moving from instrumental playing into human voice

Fig. 2.13

Each part has been subdivided by sections demarcated with rehearsal marks (letters from A to K) representing a musical event. Each section provides directions and materials including

registral ranges, dynamic marks, performance remarks, and symbols indicating different extended techniques, guiding how the musicians relate to one another throughout the process of exchange and how the musical dialogues and activities should flow and correspond. The tuning sessions between the events can be seen as a form of transition to be regarded as part of the performance itself, functioning as a place of *musicking* (Small, 1998) to create a situation in which the musicians are given a chance to observe and access other cultural sound worlds. Although improvisation plays an important role in this project, having a structure govern the overall musical activity means that it is intended to be seen as a whole piece rather than as a patchwork. One might argue that each of these tuning moments within a passage seems to divide the performance and is not related to the musical material, but to me, they act like greetings, signals to enable and invite others to come into the same mental and emotional space before the other kinds of dialogue take place.

The performance, in terms of its sound world, is shaped through different forms of transformation, starting with a trio performed by duduk, shakuhachi, and guzheng, which is gradually developed in the following section as other instruments join to increase the intensity and dynamism, and to form a harmonic texture. The sheng creates a constellation of different forms of traditional and non-traditional chords, accompanied by erhu and cello who fill and decorate the background with lines and harmonics. This music's interactivity becomes even more complex in the following section, starting at the second bar of letter B, from where I have created a subdivided-interaction (indicated by the arrows) to form a sort of contrapuntal performative situation in which some of the musicians are assigned to act and react to a specific person so that the dialogue and the engagement between the musicians becomes even more layered and organic.

Unlike the previous section, the second part, starting from letter D, begins with a single-note passage sustained by the guzheng and is presented in a rather quiet situation in

which the musician creates a drone-like effect with bow on the lowest string (A#/Bb) until letter F. This projection of a rather long, quiet meditative situation is developed in the following section when other musicians join to create layers and textures moving towards interlocking musical activity, in which the duduk and erhu create a duet of melodies whilst others (shakuhachi and cello) form a background executed with extended techniques around the drone. At the end of letter D the guzheng plays with various forms of vibratos by bending the strings continually in different dynamics and speeds whilst constantly re-adjusting the bow position toward the bridge to change the colour of the drone's character into a rather metallic, distorted sound (Fig. 2.14). Following this, starting at letter F, is a short transitional passage led by the strings as well as the mouth organs, which enters after the strings (Fig. 2.15). Here, the musicians entered a rapturous situation with energies, speeds, and articulations starting from lower to high register to create intertwined forces between tension and release. Recapitulated and extended from the previous parts, the third section remodels a mixture of expressive elements by recasting the duet with duduk and shakuhachi into a rather high-keyed, passionate, and spiritual atmosphere, as well as by recapitulating the 'drone' created by the guzheng to weave different forms of musical activities to create contrasts and forces between unification and separation. In performance, however, the music gradually became soft, quiet, and blurred at the end of the passage when the musicians started vocalizing and blending their sounds (with and without their instruments) with others to become as one, creating a sense of timbral homogeneity (Fig. 2.16).

*For sheng and shi: end improvisation here and start the tuning session.

**overtone gliss.: bow the lowest string with left hand shifting from one position to another according to the direction of the 'line' written on the score to create different qualities of musical layers with natural harmonics and noises.

***Changing tone-colour with different fingerings.

"Tuning Ceremony"

D approx. 15" **E** approx. 10" approx. 15"

Duduk ① Enter smoothly Change to duduk in G ② ③ slow, calm improvise

Shakuhachi ① Enter smoothly ② * ③

Shō ② * ③

Soprano sheng ② * ③

Guzheng ① Enter smoothly *p* *express.* ② ③ left hand *ff* *lv* near to the bow near to the bridge stop.

Erhu ① returned *p* ② artificial harmonic ③ *sfz* improvise ④ sul C 'like whispering' improvise (lower register) ⑤ *fp* *express.* ⑥ *mf* stop

Violoncello ① returned *p* ② arco ③ *fp* *express.* ④ *ppp* *pp* ab lib. stop

Violoncello ① *mf* ab lib. *sfz* *sfz* *p* *express.* *p* stop *p* stop *p* stop *ppp-mf* ab lib. stop

① natural glissandi effect, improvise with all strings

Fig. 2.14

* humming (barely open the mouth) with the vowel (a/e/i/o/u) as low as possible.
 **Improvise (irregular rhythmic patterns including natural/artificial harmonics).

The musical score is organized into four main sections: I, J, K, and L. Section I (approx. 20") features a 'Tuning Ceremony' for the Duduk and a 'Change to Duduk in D'. Section J (approx. 20") includes a 'fast, passion!' improvisation for the Duduk and a 'slow, calm' improvisation for the Shakuhachi. Section K (approx. 30") shows a 'fast, passion!' improvisation for the Duduk and a 'slow, calm' improvisation for the Shakuhachi. Section L (approx. 30") includes a 'fast, passion!' improvisation for the Duduk and a 'slow, calm' improvisation for the Shakuhachi. The score also includes a 'Soprano sheng' part with a 'fast, passion!' improvisation and a 'Guzheng' part with a 'fast, passion!' improvisation. The 'Erhu' and 'Violoncello' parts are also included, with various dynamics and articulation markings.

Fig. 2.16

This experience of working with ways of transmitting information across several layers of indeterminacy using strategies of dialogues and waiting spaces gave me a deeper understanding of the role of ambiguity within my work. The aesthetic value of the map-sketch for me lies in the way it opens up a space for the musicians to keep their attention on a more ambiguous state of continual anticipation in the development of the music's 'becoming'. My main focus, however, was on the recursive aspect of the structure in which a moment of action is part of a process of observing and redrawing things that have already been traced. In this way, the score is a map whose notation is unfinished. The score remains a sketch that seeks to offer traces of a process of establishing and re-visiting marks whose result will never be a finished work. Rather, the work lies in the process of discovering different ways through situations in which materials can be re-purposed by the musicians as they respond to one another. I can make a link between this idea of sketching and interpersonal negotiations on a cross-cultural front where my interest was not only in highlighting the final decision-making agreement between parties but also in foregrounding the process of tracing the agreement. Traces are left in the music by an interaction to discover the other possibilities shaped by the process of trying to find connection, refining a dialogue and then reflecting back on the interaction. What emerges from the body and the instrument is another model of language that, in various increasingly internalized ways, produces another musical surface of unpredictable traces and dialogues as layers of actions echo and magnify various forms of paradoxical combinations as musicians come together and pull apart.

2.3 *Re-sketch(es) II – Resurrection: Improvisational sketch*

The last work of this series is presented as a fully notated score that combines guqin, and pipa with a Western ensemble consisting of guqin and pipa with a Western ensemble consisting of; alto flute, oboe, Bb clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, viola, and cello. Taking the approach to

notation as a 'sketch' or map still further, I decided to borrow the improvisational components I created in the Re-sketch(es) and use them to scaffold the form of the ensemble work so as to reshape the otherness of an 'unknown zone' in a rather abstract and intuitive way. The music, in terms of its structural form, was inspired by the previous material and activity set up in Re-sketch(es) (Fig. 2.17).

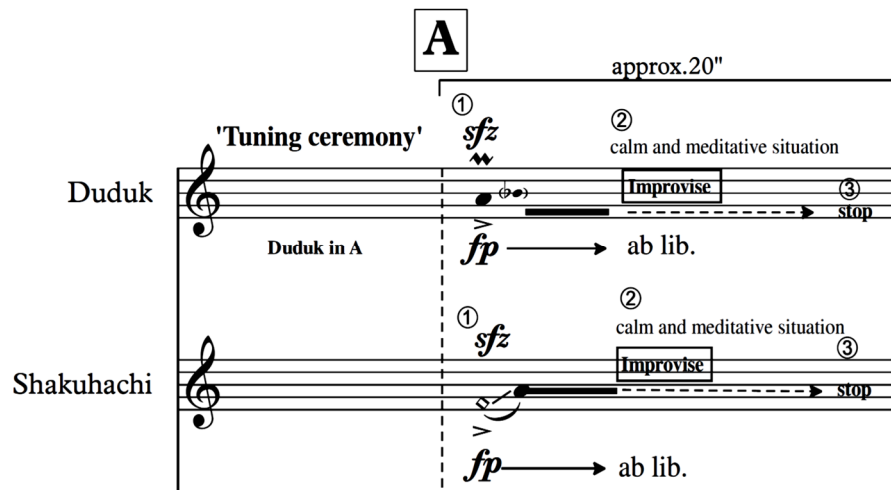


Fig. 2.17

I started looking at the passage between types of musical activities triggered by either specific or more open notation. I translated the design of the material, reconstructing and reframing the musical activities and its dialogues in a rather free, flexible, and abstract manner. This approach offered me a window in which I could activate, deactivate, and re-activate the other expressive possibilities. An example of how I treated the materials is that I created a two-part guqin solo, which shared similar materials presented with different notational systems, to create a dialogue between stability and instability. The first solo (Fig. 2.18a), situated at the beginning, represents the notion of stability and clarity, within which materials such as the rhythmic patterns, meters, and articulations are specified. The exception is with regard to the dynamics, where decisions are left to the performer based on their musicality. However, the second guqin solo (Fig. 2.18b), situated at the end of the work, by contrast, uses spatial notation to represent the transformation of time in which there is more

uncertainty as to the placement of materials so that the music can be interpreted in a more flexible and personal way by the musician.

Guqin

7 9 11 13 15 18 20 23

六四 五 六 七 六 二 四 三

十二徽 十三徽 十一徽 十三徽

六 四 三 七 五 六 七 六 五

三 四 五 六 七 五 四

*gliss.+vibrato

*rubbing string

poco accel. poco rit.

Fig. 2.18a: *Re-sketch(es) II – Resurrection*, bar 7-24

Guqin

69 73 77 81 84

♩=40 (approx. or slower)

五 四 三 一 二 三 四 三 四

六 五 四 七 五

open strings

poco rit.

(tap)

rit.

Fig. 2.18b: *Re-sketch(es) II – Resurrection*, bar 69-85

My work in recuperating aspects of the strong experiences I had with *Interbreathment* and its gong-interactive performance focuses on questions of how to trace my experiences of the interlocking impact of sound and body. Within this, my focus is on materials which can be folded into each other in a rather unstable manner. This transformation effect of crossing different musical surfaces and voices within a performance to create different and multiple identities and characters is a key component of how I think of my intercultural work, for which I have found inspiration in the work of a number of composers of Asian background including fellow Malaysian-Chinese composers of an older generation, Chong Kee Yong and Yii Kah Hoh. My initial cultural references have been Chinese composers such as Chou Wen Chung, Tan Dun, and Zhou Long, but I have tried to move away from more specifically Chinese frames of references to purposely veil these elements, hence the interest in mechanisms and philosophies of exchange and transformation at a more abstract level that underpin my research.

Composers working at subtle levels of timbral and spectral transformation such as Salvatore Sciarrino and Giacinto Scelsi (sonically and philosophically in terms of Asian ritual forms), and works such as Kaija Saariaho's *Six Japanese gardens* (1993/96) provide an extensive background in terms of musical techniques. However, in terms of exploring timbral and musical transformation within the context of cross-cultural identity formation, the work of Liza Lim is a key reference, ranging from her work with Aboriginal cultural aesthetics – for example the works *Songs found in dream* (2005), *Invisibility* (2009), *Pearl, Ochre, Hair String* (2010) – to more recent work in which the cultural models are more hidden. Of interest to me is the way intercultural thinking is transformed into more abstract strategies that reinforce the complexity and expressive range of musical performance. For example, in Lim's violin concerto, *Speak, Be silent* (2014), (Fig. 2.19) the rough sonic element that represented Aboriginal shimmer in earlier works becomes a mechanism for bridging highly

disparate instrumental worlds – the solo violin and the percussion section. In the piece, the musicians have to switch their instruments intermittently to a woodblock played with a guiro stick to create a highly irregular, massive, repetitive-insect-musical-pattern which articulates the interlocking dialogues between the ensemble and the soloist.

The musical score excerpt shows a tutti woodblock world. The woodwind and string sections are marked with woodblock patterns and guiro stick notation. The Solo Violin part features a 'fuzzy' and 'circular bow' technique. The percussion section includes a Hand Drum and Guiro. The Solo Violin part is marked with 'fuzzy' and 'circular bow' techniques. The Solo Violin part is marked with 'fuzzy' and 'circular bow' techniques.

Fig. 2.19:

An excerpt from *Speak, Be silent*, bar 63-65, demonstrating the moment in which the woodwind and string musicians played woodblocks and formed a tutti sound world as a unit to create an interlocking dialogue between the violin solo, the harp, and the percussion (hand drum and guiro)

A seemingly similar approach to the exchange of instrumental voices can be seen in Chong Kee Yong's works especially, for example, his chamber work *Song of farewell* (別歌) (2012), for boy soprano, traditional soprano sheng, choir in four groups and six percussionists, in which the composer blurs the identity of the choirs by asking them to switch between their voices and *Xun* (an accident Chinese traditional wind instrument) during the performance projecting different noisy, layering background to create dialogues with other instruments on stage. However, in response to transcultural thinking in cultural music exchange, what I have discovered is that each composer has different sentiments, musical/compositional practices, and aesthetics. Tan Dun's *The Map*, for example, explores different traditional Chinese-folk musical elements in the form of a nine-movement-multi-media concerto grosso (Fig. 2.20).



Fig. 2.20: a scene taken from the video, *Tan Dun: The Map*, showing how the solo cellist engages the singer performing the antiphonal Miao vocal tradition through multi-media on a live performance stage

One of the important elements of the work is how the entire musical dialogue unfolds through the use of a series of filmed and field recordings taken from different ethnic minorities in China, capturing the musical life of the Tuija, Miao, and Dong. What Tan Dun did was to borrow and project these resources in their pure state on the video screen as part of his

musical material whilst simultaneously exploring different musical textures and timbres in their orchestral accompaniment.

This approach seems to have become his personal benchmark in terms of how he values and integrates the exchange with other cultures by gathering collaborators together through multi-media resources. This particular mode of exchange can be seen especially in one of his most recent collaborative works, *Nu Shu*, in which he explores a disappearing written form of traditional Chinese character created and passed on by women in Hunan. Similarly to *The Map*, he utilized twelve ‘micro films’ derived from his fieldwork recordings as part of the musical components and materials to open up and unfold the dialogues between the stories of the women on film, the orchestra, and the harp soloist. However, although using technology for this purpose seemed an ideal way for the audience to visualize easily the interactivity between the performer and the micro-films, by maintaining a separation between the tradition as ‘found material’ and the other elements, such an exchanging strategy seemed problematic due to the rigidity and the fixation of the video itself – creating an antagonism between the video and the performers (and vice versa).

Instead of using technology as a way to mediate cultural exchange between different traditions, Yii Kah Hoe uses live representations of very different cultural worlds of sound and image. For example, in one of his works, *Bayang*, an orchestral piece written for Malay *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theatre) and Chinese orchestra (Fig. 2.21), Yii gathered two cultural elements that are traditionally never in dialogue on stage.



Fig. 2.21⁹

Throughout the performance, the Chinese orchestra constantly synchronize their playing with the live puppet show conducted by the *dalang* (the puppeteer), and the musical texture is used to support and amplify the movement, speed, and dynamism of each character in different scenes. Nevertheless, although the results of Yii's and Tan's work are different, to me their approaches share a similar attitude towards the idea of exchange between different cultures and orchestras in that each culture remains separately contained. This particular formation of cultural exchange can also be seen in the use of quotation in Takemitsu's *November Steps* (1967), or even to some extent in Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968-1969), although both of them claim a different agenda in their use of alien cultural materials for purely musical purposes. Of stronger interest to me is one of Yii's works called *My Spirit is Dancing!*, a solo work (Fig. 2.22) that explores a traditional Balinese war dance called the Baris dance (Fig. 2.23) in which Yii replicates the Balinese gamelan sonorities on the piano with the choreographic movement of the traditional dance form reformulated in the notation of hand and foot gestures for the pianist.

⁹ http://www.yiikahoe.com/uploads/3/7/7/8/3778942/8270781_orig.jpg

My Spirit is Dancing!

*for solo piano
composed for Tomoko Honda

Yii Kah Hoe

(without touching the key!)
♩ = 50

** Play on air (off key)

Floot (R) (L)

Stamping feet onto the ground and shaking ankles to create sounds.

ca. 3" δ^{va}

Play on key

Ped. II

The score is in 4/4 time. The piano part (right hand) begins with a series of chords and single notes, marked with *sfz* and *mp*. The left hand plays a simple bass line. The flute part (right and left) plays a melody with a wavy line above it, marked with *sfz* and *mp*. The off-key piano part (right and left) plays a melody with a wavy line above it, marked with *sfz* and *mp*. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *sfz*, *mp*, *f*, and *ppp*.

- * Tied Dancing bells (like Indian dancing bell - Ghungaroo) around the ankles and wrists of pianist.
- ** Play on air; without touching the key above at the note(s) indicated.

Off key

3

sfz

mp

don't move!

don't move!

* Ft

as before

f

mp

sfz

sfz

mp

On key

sfz

mp

Ped. II

The score continues with the piano part (right hand) playing a series of chords and single notes, marked with *sfz* and *mp*. The left hand plays a simple bass line. The flute part (right and left) plays a melody with a wavy line above it, marked with *sfz* and *mp*. The off-key piano part (right and left) plays a melody with a wavy line above it, marked with *sfz* and *mp*. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *sfz*, *mp*, *f*, and *ppp*.

Fig. 2.22



Fig. 2.23¹⁰

Yii embeds an imaginary Balinese gamelan ensemble into the piano, capturing the interlocking energy between the gamelan and dancer to create a contrapuntal performance between the hands playing the piano, a part for the pianist's feet stamping on the floor (middle stave), and hand gestures performed in the air (upper stave). During the performance, the performer has to create a 'dance' by moving her physical body whilst performing the piece, assimilating the choregraphical gestures of a Balinese dancer moving their body whilst performing on and around the piano (Fig. 2.24).



Fig. 2.24: The pianist (Tomoko Honda) performing some of the hand gestures from the *Baris* dance in Yii Kah Hoe's *My Spirit is Dancing!*

¹⁰ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/ca/17_Years_of_Sekar_Jepun_2014-11-01_11.jpg

These performative elements create a highly fascinating interlocking result. To me, this is a highly successful example of a more in-depth form of transcultural exchange than a work like Kagel's *Exotica*, which is rather problematic. In Kagel's work, the representation of the performative gestures, instrumentation, and use of materials from Asian as well as other cultural sources, is, to me as a composer from Southeast Asia, rather too superficial. This problem can be seen, for example, in one of the productions given by the sixtrum percussion ensemble during the MNM musical festival at Montréal, 2013, in which the (male) performers appeared in tuxedos with hats from different cultures, created several musical events including dancing a sort of processional ritual ceremony (or musical carnival so to speak), snake charming, and an Asian-flavoured drumming performance (with Chinese calligraphy background) executed together with different Eastern musical instruments.¹¹ Such cultural showcasing may lead to a false interpretation of certain cultural references by the audience. For example, a rather negative interpretation can be founded in another production given on 12th September in 2014 during the Ultima Oslo contemporary music festival by Ensemble Modern, at which instruments such as gongs and a *rebab* were carelessly handled by the musicians, who threw them around on stage during the performance. Such performative behaviour may lead to cultural misappropriation, causing disrespect to the cultural fabric of the instruments and the performance of the tradition. The key is that most of these instruments are regarded as 'power objects' for ritual purposes; such instruments, especially in the Southeast Asia region, like Indonesian gongs, would be highly revered and never handled or approached without spiritual offerings and ritual preparation. In contrast to Kagel, in terms of the handling and reinterpretation of such powerful instruments, instead of keeping the purity form of the instruments, Aloysius Suwardi, an Indonesian composer, instrument maker, and gamelan expert, built a number of metal forms of percussive

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgQ2vMNg4jQ>

instruments including giant gambang motorized metallophones, enormous African-inspired-giant gambang xylophones, and hydraulic water-filled bamboo flutes, reforming the setting, the performativity, and the acoustic quality of the traditional instruments to create a sort of metallic gong installation of *gamelan*.



Fig. 2.25: The actual instrumental layout in one of Suwardi's latest works, *Planet Harmonik*¹²

In my work, *Interbreathment*, however, the identity of the gongs, including the 52 hanging *kulingtangan* is changed; they are no longer treated as an instrument but as part of the body of the installation itself. The extensive use of 'speaking gongs' is another interpretation of mine that shows that such power objects are being handled in a reasonable manner. Another example, in response to the 'throwing gong manner', can be found in the final section of the performance as the whirling *kulintangan* were being thrown intentionally by one of the musicians, recreating space and spacing between them for interactive purposes.

In order to create a permeation beyond the surface differences, trans or cross-cultural exchange, regardless of peoples, cultures, events, or even objects should not, I believe, focus purely on foregrounding the surface features. It needs to engage and interact with living

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ob3KjHasOuY>

traditions and performance practices. In my practice, I have tended to look for ways to re-formulate cultural materials. My strategy is not primarily about assimilating cultural traits but about finding a new character from the exchange. Interestingly, what I have realized from my experiences is that this notion of blurring through exchange is not meant to result in a distancing; nor does it forbid connections between differences. Rather, it is by observing and recognizing a new kind of networking relationship between things that a dialogue can be established in a productive way in which I found ways of expressing the ambiguity of collaboration that has become an important theme in my work. This notion of transference or translation of aspects through interactive activities to form and achieve a new material that has been blurred and distorted from one work to another offers me a glimpse of a multi-layered, interactive, fluid form. Perhaps it is part of the trait of transcultural thinking or what Martinson describes as: 'The knowledge that is now at one's disposal creates a field of activity in which the permeation and intermixing of cultures of all sorts are understood not in their particularity but in their reciprocal relations' (Martinson, 2016, p. 3). This sense of fluidity, with its inconsistency and instability in varying states of crossing and emerging states, reforming and deforming between different spaces and times, directed me to look at aspects of traditional aural/oral transmission in terms of a living process of interconnectivity. Of interest are the ways in which information is altered and flourishes between the cracks in the process of being passed down. What results from the multiplicity of oneself permeated with another after the initial encounters and conflict of a collaboration? And how are these differences transformed through that passage? How can the unpredictability of aural/oral interaction be transformed into new and emerging unities and be activated in a compositional practice?

Chapter 3: An aural/oral transmission and transformation of a family treasure: *Yu Moi*

No culture stays static, it's in constant dialogue with everything around it. (Lim, 2010, p. 27–28)

3.1 The concept of aural/oral transmission

In early 2014, I started an experimental project collaborating with Anna Chong Kee Xin, a Malaysian-Chinese folk singer/song-writer based in Kuala Lumpur. The proposal for the collaboration was to explore and reflect on some of my creative interests and ideas concerning subjects including aural/oral transmission, music notation, and the Chinese Hakka (客家) dialect. We agreed early on before starting the collaboration to explore possible ways of approaching an individualized performance practice as well as to experiment with our working methodology. In terms of the final outcome, this collaboration aimed to arrive at a contemporary interpretation of Chinese traditions of transmission by finding different modalities of interpretation and presenting them in a rather unconventional way. We began with a long-distance-working approach to the project whereby most of the early exchange (in terms of ideas, discussion, and information such as notes and recordings) was done virtually through e-mail and Skype. This approach was initially a big challenge for us as we agreed that we would begin without a specific agenda and keep the working process and its development quite open and flexible. However, more concrete ideas as well as firm decisions were begun in the middle of November 2014, and the 'finished' work was recorded on the 10th of December 2014 at Plan A studio in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Aural/oral traditions, in general, whether found in the West or East, can be considered the oldest forms of knowledge transmission. This is the traditional way in which personal skills, knowledge, and experience are passed down, and is how the predecessor imparts the essences of their very personal own recipe to their successor. My particular interest in this form of cultural learning activity is with the process of becoming that lies within the

transmission process. As a way of preserving, transferring, and creating something, I found that this way of cultural transmission activity is strongly connected to Ingold's 'in-between-ness' idea (2015, p. 120-122) discussed earlier where traditional aural/oral transmission is not only a movement of exchange but, at the same time, a process of self-growing. For example, like the very popular children's game 'Chinese Whispers' (or 'Telephone'), the message whispered and passed on by one person (the so called originator or 'predecessor') undergoes an inevitable process of change and distortion as discrepancies in the message accumulate as it is passed from person to person. Discovering, and discussing the differences and the way the message changes its meaning by comparing the end result with the original version is the most fun part of this game.

A distortive process of transmission such as in 'Chinese Whispers' is at play in the the *Yu Moi* project and I was fascinated to explore how aural/oral transmission conveys knowledge which is transformed as it is, transferred. Tim Ingold, in his lecture note 'To Learn Is to Improvise a Movement along a Way of Life' (2010), argues that 'Knowledge cannot be transmitted directly because the idea that knowledge is transmitted separates out the knowledge that is transmitted from the practitioner in which it is enacted'. The original information provided by the first person in the children's game for instance, may turn into something completely different due to the accumulative interpolation over time in the process of re-telling. So too, with cultural transmission, the so-called original is remade in each iteration where it accumulates an element of each person through which it passes. The distortion is the trace of the person and their own story.

As it is passed down the line from the predecessor, the form of the knowledge becomes more disparate, and, I would contend, becomes less important, or even irrelevant to the successor due to the process of its dilution. However, as a composer, instead of over-highlighting either the distance or the proximity of its dis-connectivity, I find these

differences and distortions intriguing, and interesting in the way they suggest themselves as otherness, a manifestation of a new existence. I can make a connection here to Liza Lim's statement that there is no absolute cultural purity because no culture, including hybrid culture, stays static but constantly grows and flourishes, and its 'liveness' will be changing and growing from one generation to another through dialogues with other cultures, things, and people from time to time. To me, this notion of 'be-coming' to otherness by accumulating the erroneousness of an individual's mark, the mark of one's re-translation through the recursive moment is the most valuable thing. The movement through space and time of this particular moment inseparably continues the inconsistency of its interactive activities over time until it reaches a certain point when a new interpretation, a new 'world', will be revealed.

Taking this direction of thinking into my work *Yu Moi*, I was concerned with the cultural embodiment of how one physical body, through sound, can re-inscribe memory, reflecting, re-translating, and connecting back to a cultural lineage. I wondered how these values, the meanings, and the purpose of this aural/oral traditional practice could find expressive form in my musical world. Does the successor receive only the pure information of the knowledge they learnt from his/her predecessor? By copying directly throughout the process of learning along with the predecessor, what kind of translation is made by the successor through responding, practising, and re-translating during that process? Is the knowledge that is being (re)translated over a period of time still relevant? How are these new translations being brought forward? What kind of post-interpretation will be made in the future? Nevertheless, how do I, as a composer, bring and tackle these concerns, problems, and solutions and bring them into the project; how are these discussions to which my current musical practice has related reflected in my work? What do I, as a composer, as a successor,

want to rethink with regards to the knowledge I have received, learnt, and understood from the lineage of my own ancestral Lee family?

3.2 Hakka children's rhyme: A Lee family 'treasure'

In 2003, a very special task for my family – as a large Chinese family of Hakka descent – was to carry out the old Hakka tradition of celebrating an important cultural event. It was my grandfather's 80th birthday, his *shou* birthday (the Chinese character is written as 壽, which literally means longevity of life). My father was appointed to organize the family performance. While considering the content of the family performance, my father wanted to make a sort of 'bridge' to the new generation (my generation) that highlighted the 'mark' that represented the lineage of our Lee family and paid tribute to an important legendary senior in our family, my great-grandfather. In this regard, my father therefore considered that this would be an appropriate time for him to pass down something meaningful to this new generation through performance. That something was what he had learnt from his own grandfather (my great-grandfather) during his childhood. It is a family poem, an old traditional Chinese Hakka children's rhyme (see Fig. 3.1). An English translation follows:

Good time to grow ginger, when the moon is bright.

When ginger starts to sprout, good time to grow bamboo.

When bamboo starts to flower, good time to grow melon.

And good time was ruined by naughty grandkids; descending upon the melon field

Plucking, eating fruits yet to ripen and selling them whilst still undersized.

In fury, grandpa picked up the cane, to let grandkids taste the pain.

So grandkids took flight, with grandma rearing in sight at grandpa's maddening pursuit.

They ran up to the hill, then yielding to trackless hill top, they took to climbing tree.

Grandma went all the way; climbed too but fell.

Landing hard with twinkled eyes.

And breathless grandpa.

Whiskers stiffening from fumes of helpless rage,

Snarling at rascal grandkids way up on the tree.

(Translation provided by my father, Gabriel Lee Kah Min)

Most of the family members in my generation are unable to speak either Hakka dialect or Mandarin, primarily because they received an English education at school. Secondly, most of their parents do not speak the Hakka dialect to their children but instead use English as a common language in their daily communication. Therefore, only the three eldest sons, my elder brother, elder cousin, and myself, were taught the so-called ‘family treasure’ and chosen to recite the poem at the family gathering. According to my father, my great-grandfather was then not only the most respected person in the local community, from my father’s generation’s perspective; he was also the most intelligent, multi-talented story-teller, able to perform numerous classic traditional Chinese Hakka recitations, folk-songs, and tales. When I learnt this family poem (without a title), I was told that it was part of an oral tradition passed down from my father’s great-grandfather in China. I discovered, however, that one of the popular titles by which the poem is known in the Hakka community is ‘The Bright Moon’, or in Chinese 月光光.

Huang (2010) has investigated and documented different interpretations of this poem, focusing on Hakka nursery rhymes in Taiwan that start with the phrase ‘the bright moon’. One exciting discovery for me in Huang’s thesis was the fifteen similar versions of the poem that share the same opening phrase. In these versions from different areas in Taiwan, the words, the pronunciation, and the phrases of the poem differ, so changing the meaning of the content itself. It is believed that this poem is among the most widely disseminated and circulated among the Hakka people, especially those migrating from China to other places,

especially in Southeast Asia. For most Malaysian Hakka people in Sabah, the poem is easily recognized – especially by my grandfather and father’s generation. For instance, Anna’s father (also a Hakkanese), whose family migrated from a different region of China, recognizes the title of the poem, but not our family’s particular version. This discovery of the poem’s many versions and the fluidity of the poem’s form as transformed through processes of migration and imprecise transmission encouraged me to explore ideas of transmission and transformation in this collaborative project.

To use the poem as material in our aural/oral transmission experiment, the poem was laid out as Chinese characters arranged in the traditional way (in vertical columns and read from right to left). I analysed the poem, marking key parts of the text with colours as shown below (Fig. 3.1) with my combination and grouping of words and phrases, suggesting possible and interesting ways of reciting and articulating the words within the poem.

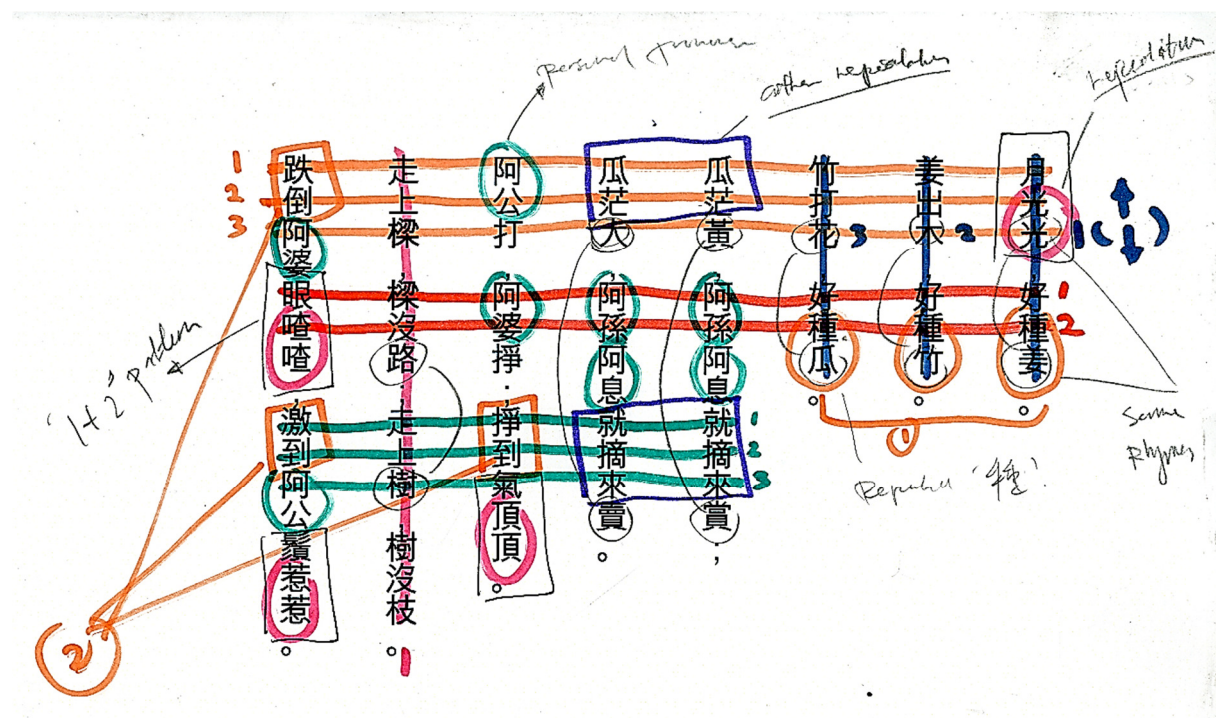


Fig. 3.1: ‘The Bright Moon’ Hakka poem marked with different numbers and colours showing possible structural correlations

For instance, the words circled in pink share the same rhyme scheme with other words. Another interesting example, in terms of possible word combination and sound

recitation, can be found with the two lines coloured red and indicated with a circled number one (top) and ‘two’ (below) suggesting the text be read horizontally from right to left. These show a similar structural form of phrasing, repeating some of the words at the beginning to create a sense of unity in the poem. For example, the first five words in phrase number one are 好好好, 啊啊 while the phrase at number two is 種種種, 孫孫. With this example, one can clearly recognize a feasible relationship between the structural form and the sounding recitation. By considering the meaning, sounds, patterns, and structure of recitation, this approach allowed me to look at the text in a new way, extending the possible interpretations of this poem.

3.3 The origin of the sound material of *Yu Moi*: The guqin solo recordings

In addition to the Hakka poem, another important material in this project is the sound recording which I sent to Anna before starting this experiment. The recording is of my previous work *Re-Sketch(es) II – Resurrection* (2014) for an East/West instrumental chamber group of alto flute, oboe, (bass) clarinet, guqin, pipa, and string trio, premiered by the New Music Ensemble and MCI Classical Chinese Music Ensemble during the 2014 MCI international composition competition’s finalists concert at the Royal Danish Academy. What I did with this recording is extract the two solo sections played by the guqin (discussed at the end of Chapter 2). This recording was utilized during the following stage of our experiment as an aural score for Anna to work with in an improvisational way.

3.4 An idiomatic process of ‘retranslation’: A process of transformation and its transformation from music instrument to human voice

The key idea of this part of the experiment was to explore the feasible changes and developments of the idea of passing on or transmitting between two different parties (in this case, the recording and Anna herself). I wanted to take the powerful experience of transmission in learning and performing the family poem and to embody that in the collaboration with Anna. Two pieces of equipment – a microphone and a laptop along with

music editing software Cubase 5 – were set up to begin this aural/oral transmission experiment. These pieces of equipment functioned as follows: firstly, they were used to document all of Anna’s transcription recordings; secondly, to bring all these recordings back into our discussion through e-mail and Skype for exchange purposes in the course of our long-distance collaboration. What I wanted to see was the emergent processes of transmission and transformation in which two important materials, the guqin recording and the poem, were reproduced and retranslated using a human voice.

The following experiment in this process of transmission is quite direct yet restricted: Anna listened to the guqin recording with headphones and recorded her own vocal realization of the music without reading or knowing the original musical notation beforehand. Since Anna had to quickly formulate her ideas by mimicking and replicating the sound of the guqin recording, each of the transcription recordings resulted in many different and interesting materials that did not sound similar to how they had actually been played by the guqin. There were six transcription recordings in total from this part of the experimentation; each of them was saved separately into four different folders categorized and named in order from ‘first stage’ to ‘fourth stage’ (Fig. 3.2).

Stages	1	2		3			4
Label	guqin imitation	Part one	Part three	Completed with extended idea	Full length performance		Final recording
Duration	2 minutes	2' 27''	2' 13''	3'33''	9'27''		10''
Text chosen	random	random	recited orderly from the beginning of the poem	Random (sometimes without the text)			Random (sometimes without the text)
Original sources	guqin recording (first part solo)	guqin imitation	guqin recording (second part solo)	guqin recording (first part solo)	completed with extended idea	part three	full length performance

Fig. 3.2

3.4 (a) First stage

What I found interesting from this first trial transcription recording was how different Anna’s interpretation sounded compared with the guqin recording. The most interesting sounds occurred when Anna was not able to accurately replicate or translate the sound effects or

techniques of the guqin due to the limitation of either her vocal range or her singing technique. Therefore, in thinking about the best way to replicate those challenging sounds played by the guqin in her transcription, Anna re-formulated the ideas by using another more idiomatic way to recode them based on her personal creative imagination. This projected another imaginative characteristic quality that suggested the sound world of guqin in different form. For instance, responding to the technique of the arpeggio strumming effect played by the guqin, Anna distorted her voice by projecting a multiphonic sound quality in order to create the effect of multiple sounds. Another example, in terms of expressing and interpreting the guqin's sound world, is Anna's use of a sob-like singing technique to create a breathy kind of noise correlated with the guqin's 'rubbing string' effect. Also, to replicate the changing vibrato effect created by the guqin, Anna used a hand muting technique to reproduce similar results. One might think of these sounds as the failed results of translation in this experiment. However, I saw these so-called failures positively, regarding them as rewards of this experiment, connected to a core idea of how one might receive and respond to the first-hand information, a reflection of Anna's deeper understanding and interpretation of the music during the process of transmission. For me, this was how Anna exhibited her most valuable creative contribution during each stage of the project. Also, for me, her failures seemed to highlight the originality and the authenticity in this part of the aural score experiment. In a sense, these failures are the traces of an individual creative mark.

3.4 (b) Second stage

What I heard in the transcriptions at this stage was that the flow and fluency were progressively getting smoother and more idiomatic. From what I heard from these recordings, Anna seemed more comfortable, confident, and clear in the ways in which she chose to replicate the particular sound of the guqin.

3.4 (c) Third stage

The way of responding to the guqin audio recording changed at this third stage of the experiment. Instead of strictly and directly following and translating the sound of the guqin solo, as a way of giving Anna more freedom and creative license when responding to the aural score the original guqin recordings (both solos) were imported into Cubase and then edited and flexibly extended (based on our discussions) directly in the software. In this regard, we started to be more systematic in organizing the significant changes of the newly extended transcription. Anna made and categorized them according to the structure of their partials, using block shapes marked with different colours in Cubase's interface. Having a better structural understanding of the entire work, we decided that the text arrangement of this first transcription recording should start from the beginning as in the previous transcription recording of 'part three' of the second stage. While the second recording ('full length performance') was considered to be the most nearly finished work from this part of the transmission experiment, one can easily find that this so-called full length performance recording demonstrates a more individually handcrafted creative idea that is extended with different forms of vocal interpretation using extended singing techniques such as whistling, puffing, screeching, murmuring, reciting, mumbling, and screaming, projecting a wide sonic range of vocal qualities. An improvisational performance is also added later to the middle part of this 'full length performance' transcription recording, where Anna started to improvise freely and independently. The outcome of these improvisational sounds are very expressive, projecting a series of noisy melodies of varied timbre, and texture with a very wild and free section of recitation in Hakka language.

3.4 (d) Fourth stage

This final transcription recording can be regarded as an extended version of the third-stage recording, with minor editing and corrections made mostly at the beginning (before the start

of the improvisation). Although these edited transcription recordings were done within a single project file, what I would like to emphasize clearly is that each of these completed transcription recordings were the main materials to which we would refer throughout our experiment with aural scores. In a sense, each recording is the final production that was used directly in our discussions. With this in mind, the image of the Cubase interface (Fig. 3.3) does not show the actual four stages of transcription recordings, but instead the final appearance of the work that emerged from this aural music notation experiment. The image demonstrates the complexity of associations that result from using this editing software.

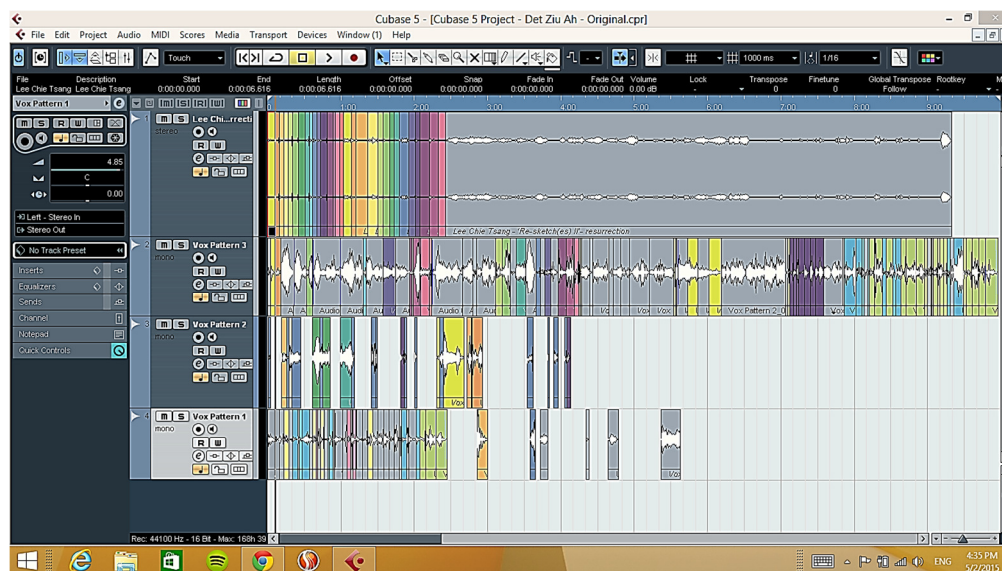


Fig. 3.3: Cubase interface, showing the working process of the transcription recordings in this part of aural/oral transmission experiment

According to Fig. 3.3, there are only four tracks within the project file:

1. First track: the completed recording of my chamber piece *Re-Sketch(es) II – Resurrection*; the colour markings of this first track show the breaking point (further explanation is provided in reference to the third track) where we started using colour to mark these block shapes within Anna's transcription recordings starting from the third stage, and the grey colour represents the rest of the music of the chamber piece.

2. Second track: This track is the final outcome of the third- and fourth-stage mixture of materials. As shown in Fig. 3.3, the partial colour block transcriptions hardly defines what exactly it is and where it comes from. Since the key purpose of this interface is not to show the process of a step-by-step working method, each transcription recording becomes the main reference point to which we refer back in our discussions.
3. Third track: These partial, colourful blocks of Anna's transcription are purposely created to function as a store to which we could easily refer during the process of adjusting and editing the material.
4. Fourth track: Here are two earlier recordings combined (the first and second stage) to produce the final result of its worked appearance. This track is the final result of the work from which it is hard to define the specific reference material.

However, one may easily be confused looking at these tracks as none of them specifically refer to Anna's transcription recordings, whose track numbers do not directly represent any specific stages of our working procedure.

3.5 A story teller's music/story notation: A visual score

In further exploring the previous transcription recordings, Anna and I began to consider what form an aural/oral musical notation might take. We were especially interested in exploring interactions and connections between past and present in live performance. We first began by considering a visual mode of communication placed within a live improvisation performance in which the embodiment of one's expressivity becomes a key idea, suggesting a new form of visual notation. This particular idea was derived from my personal experience and memory of the learning process of my father teaching the family Hakka poem. I remembered being fascinated that whilst he was describing and explaining the background, meaning, and plot of

the poem, his reading of it was exaggerated and enhanced by his facial and bodily movements. What I found even more interesting about the changing emotional expression of his countenances and the movements of his body was not only their function in teaching me both the words and intonations of the poem, but also a kind of ephemeral abstract sensation carrying a significant amount of other information that seemed to be an essential component within the learning/interaction process. Interestingly, during the process, the continuity of this ephemeral component led me to re-shape, re-memorize, and re-connect back to the words and intonations of the poem in order to attain the wholeness of the poem. Most importantly, this recursive moment of emergence and engagement, which exaggerated my father's emotional and physical expressions, was somehow navigating me to the point at which the memory, the movement, and the sound were shaped as a unity. With this in mind, all these thoughts and elements were therefore taken into consideration when searching for a new and appropriate form of music score/notation for the project with Anna.

To create this visual notation, four selected transcription recordings were used from the material generated thus far to create the visual part of the score. They are as follows:

Stage	1	2	3	4
Label	guqin imitation	Completed with extended idea	Full length performance	Full length performance
Recording	first stage	third stage	third stage	fourth stage
Duration	Approx.2'	Approx.3'27''	Approx.9'27''	Approx.10'

Fig. 3.4

To begin, I used a video camera to film Anna against a white background while she re-translated each of the four selected vocal transcriptions using her facial expressions and body language to transform her audio performance into a visual form. The video documentation captured a series of movements and actions derived from mimicking and replicating the different sounds of her own vocal recordings (Fig. 3.5).



Fig. 3.5

3.6 Staging the visual score in live performance

What Anna sang in the recording studio was put together with the finished visual score. Throughout the performance, Anna vocally improvised by randomly reading and choosing from the available on-screen images located on a large projector screen (Fig. 3.6).



Fig. 3.6

As ephemeral engagement was considered to be integral to exploring elements of individual performance practice modalities, we did not want to artificially touch up this experiment. The

final performance, therefore, was performed and recorded in one take so as to document and retain the purity of the first encounter with the performance situation. That is, we wanted to explore the authenticity of Anna's responsiveness and the complexity of her inner dialogue within this recording. Since the visualized element is the key idea specifically for creating this type of notation, the video is silent and focuses on projecting and emphasizing her appearance. For the live improvisational performance, the four silent moving images were placed together on the screen (see Fig. 3.6), each played from the beginning with only the fourth video (bottom right-hand side) remaining until the end of the piece.

The other three videos – the first (top left-hand side), the second (top right-hand side), and the third (bottom left-hand side) – either stopped or came back separately on the screen at various points during the performance based on each videos' duration. See Fig. 3.7 ([a-d]).



Fig. 3.7a

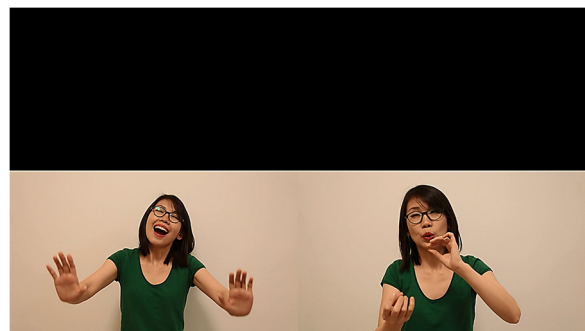


Fig. 3.7b

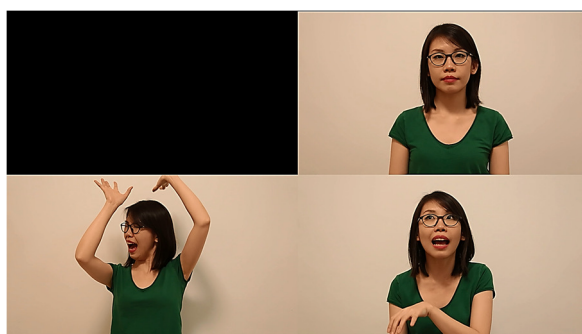


Fig. 3.7c

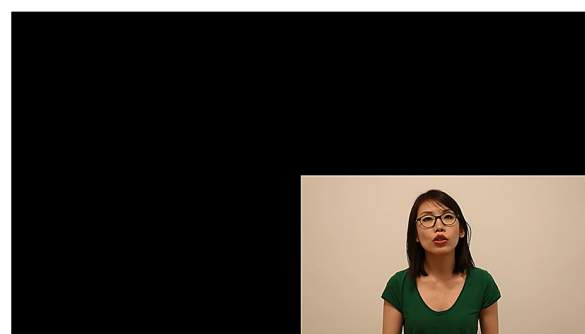


Fig. 3.7d

Further explanation about the order of appearance of these three videos is as follows. First of all, the first video stops at two minutes and nine seconds, followed by the second video which stops at two minutes and thirty-five seconds. The second video then pops back again at seven minutes and eleven seconds after the improvisational section, and the second and third video

stop together at nine minutes and thirty-four seconds. In the end, Anna finished her performance together with the fourth video. One observation about the live improvisational performance experiment concerns the process of synchronization between Anna and the visual score: what I found interesting about the gestural movement of her images from the visual score was the suggestion of a new kind of musical vocabulary that stimulated and inspired her live improvisation. From the pictures in Fig. 3.8 (a-d), it is clear to see how Anna connected, synchronized, transformed, and translated the images of herself from the video(s) back to her improvisation together with her body movement during the live performance recording session.



Fig. 3.8a



Fig. 3.8b



Fig. 3.8c



Fig. 3.8d

The complexity of this ‘one person’s multiplicity’ was strongly connected to the feeling of the individual mark in relation to the developing aural/oral transmission process. The performer was confronted with transformations of her individual qualities, which opened up other possible ways of interpreting her own individual performance practice. She experienced a projection of different inner spaces of her being and created a dialogue with these elements of her own becoming. One might think that the purpose of the visual score is only to function

as a reminder during improvisation, yet these images are more like a link or connection between self-discovery and one's previous conversations. The recursive moment of Anna's conversation, her inner dialogue, had been continually opened up, passing multiple 'thresholds' and allowing her to enter another unknown world of herself. During the live performance, while interacting and responding to these different levels of personal stories and experiences, I can see Anna responding as a traveller or a researcher who is sometimes either investigating or remembering stories behind the images due to the confusion and flexibility of her present responsiveness and previous experiences.

3.7 Bringing the 'story' back into life: Transmitting the 'experiences' from the live performance back to the audience

Wanting to share our stories and experiences of this collaborative experiment with an audience, we published a final post-production video. Since the value of present connection and (self-)participation are key elements of what we wanted to project to the public audience, we decided that the final video should be presented as if by a story-teller who shares and interacts with their story for their audience in a similar way to how my father taught me the poem. In this way, the audience gains a stronger sense of involvement and participation, as if experiencing the process of this familial aural/oral tradition. Moreover, in order to successfully achieve a greater degree of connection, the effectiveness of post-production editing was taken into account.

Since the visual score and the final improvisational performance audio recording itself already existed with a strong message, we decided to show the visual score as the main display with the video played alongside audio from Anna's final improvisational performance, as if Anna were actually performing the piece live. Towards the very end of the video the environment in which Anna recorded the audio and read from the visual score is revealed, concluding her improvisational performance together with the visual score in the recording studio (see Fig. 3.8 [a-d]). Nevertheless, to emphasise more effectively and clearly

the order in which the images appear, the video was edited in such a way that one can see the post-production images becoming larger when other images are no longer being projected (Fig. 3.9 [a-b]).



Fig. 3.9a



Fig. 3.9b

With these editing adjustments, the audience may find the new video performance easy to follow throughout the entire performance since it effectively reduces the confusion of multiple images with the single vocal sound source.

3.8 Some afterthoughts

The most important realization I had during my collaboration with Anna was the essence and value of aural/oral traditions, which are very private one-to-one activities within a private dialogue. The essence of ‘be-coming’ was very strongly expressed through one-to-one interaction in the process of making this work. I have discovered that the conversation within this private dialogue is a family treasure, rendering a deeper insight into family connection and provoking a new appreciation of the inspiration that can be afforded by invisible cultural and creative knowledge.

Cultural referencing can lead to uncertainty as to whether the connection between one’s creativity and another’s remains authentic. Without the experience of self-participation and self-realization within this interactive private dialogue, one’s creativity might easily lose some essence in terms of values grounded in originality and authenticity. I think of cultural referencing as a rather problematic term that suggests taking something away from something. This might consist in justifying and imposing personal thoughts by simply

referring to a certain cultural reference that points back to the context of one's own work without a specific focus or any real present experience and self-participation.

In my personal point of view, what I understand about the idea of present experience and self-participation is a recursive process of reconnection and recognition that can lead me to discover the potential 'otherness' of the embodiment of myself. It is not a justification of an emblematic self-representation, yet it is a journey of how one's cultural experience is transcended by the process of cultural transmission and transformation. It is a way in which one could plausibly gain another and deeper level of insight by closely and intimately learning, listening, and interacting with the other. It is possible to find this treasure-of-otherness within private dialogues with the people one may meet.

Further evaluating this project upon finishing the collaboration, what I have realized about my musical creativity over the last several years is a constantly repeating moment/situation of self-connection that, in my case, often relates back to my family and my personal life. For example, in this project, a particular reconnection to my family language, the Hakka language, has given me a great opportunity to reconsider the value of my family's cultural treasures and leads me to a deeper understanding of what tradition means for my current creativity/personal thinking.

Chapter 4: Patterns of transformation: *Linangkit*¹³

Meaning is not produced by grammatical structures and formal codes, though they have important roles to play; it is created through individual action [as] a part of cultural process. (Morphy, 1998, p. 6)

4.1 The *Linangkit* project

The word *Linangkit* refers to one of Sabah's traditional Indigenous forms of embroidery, formed by different layers of patterning of knots with colours and shapes. I used these patterns to develop ideas for pitch and rhythmic organization and formal ideas, and as the basis for my fourth collaboration with the dancer Tang Sook Kuan, building on the earlier experiences with gongs described in Chapter 1. This project comprises a music-dance installation involving a dancer (Tang Sook Kuan) performing within a sculpture of elastic string and an oboist (Howard Ng), as well as a stand-alone work for oboe solo (performed by Peter Veale) extracted from the larger work called *The Project of Linangkit*. The collaboration, in terms of its working modality, began as an e-mail discussion before a meeting in Sabah and proceeded in a similar way to my previous project, *Yu Moi* in terms of modelling, observing, and realizing the changing process of its becoming to access a world (in-)between participants, and between sound and movement, music and choreography.

The word 'pattern', in Western music compositional history, has often been characterized as a somewhat solid, concrete, organized musical idea functioning, more or less, as a form. As a musical idea, it has functioned as a key element in defining a musical entity including style, meaning, and aesthetic. Pattern-making is highly associated with musical elements such as rhythmic impulses, gestures, and modes of organizing, building, and expanding one's musical vocabulary or syntax through repetition. Examples from

¹³ Named differently amongst the *Kadazandusun* for example, *linangkit* in *Lotud* tribe, *rangkit* in *Rungus*, and *berangkit* in *Bajau*.

composers such as Morton Feldman (*Why Patterns?*), Arvo Pärt (*Fratres*), Philip Glass (Violin Concerto no.1), Terry Riley (*In C*), Steve Reich (*Clapping Music*), Bryn Harrison (*Repetitions in Extended Time*), and Matthew Sergeant (*bet denagel*) illustrate the power of patterns in dialogue to form, deform, and reform processes of structural transformation. Against this more architectural/structural use of patterns and in response to the idea of grammatical structure expressed by Morphy, I started thinking of patterns and pattern-making itself as a somewhat malleable, tractable, and pliable entity, as a trigger to accomplishing a piece of work through movement, action, and integration instead of thinking pattern itself as a single unit, form, or musical element within a certain musicological specification (system, framework, or theory). That is, in researching *Linangkit*, my focus is not merely on patterns as a musical form (or material) but looking for the holistic perspective within the performative aspects of the making of embroidery, thinking about what is behind the embroidery and to look for analogous ways of organizing the temporality as well as the relationship between the materials. I wanted to find translations to the aesthetic through collaboration and was interested in looking at the process of how the patterns and pattern-making might be experienced as a form of self-communication.

Tang Sook Kuan is a practitioner of *linangkit* and hence this opened up the choreographic as well as musical element of sewing, which proved to be a key point of discussion in the collaboration. This, again, connects with the underlying theme of all of my explorations into non-Western and so-called traditional practices, which is how the process of transmission and translation between cultural forms can lead to a form of ‘inbetween-ness’, that is, an experience of emergent creative energy in which one sees a dynamic relation between the positive aspect of something coming into being as well as the negative ground from which it arises. In order to connect to such a concrete cultural relic in this preliminary stage, my strategy was to find a practitioner with whom I could learn the embroidery

technique and to experience the process of the creation of making a piece of *linangkit* myself. I had questions about how long it takes to complete a pattern, what sort of relationship exists between the embroiderer and the object, and how such a relationship might be carried over to and extended in my compositional practice and thinking. However, I was in the UK during that particular period and was not able to make a trip back to Sabah to meet up with Odun Lindu, a senior *linangkit* practitioner who is still actively preserving and practising this sewing tradition within the Lotud community in the Tuaran district in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. To break down the barriers, Sook Kuan agreed to pay a visit to the workshop given by Odun Lindu herself whilst making a live video recording for me as a way of starting to develop our work and exchange.

The video I received from Sook Kuan is a ten-minute documentary film with interviews, portraying the processes and the qualities of how a piece of Lotud-style *linangkit*¹⁴ is formed (Fig. 4.1[a-c]).

¹⁴ Formed and built by different various repetitive, symmetrical forms of crossed shapes and geometrical patterns (which is inspired by the melon seed) with colours, a piece of Lotud-style *linangkit* pattern whose motive and its narrative are profoundly connected to the subject of nature expresses the beauty of flora and fauna of the Borneo rainforest.



Fig. 4.1a: A moment capturing how Odun Lindu formed and sewed the knots and patterns on a traditional costume



Fig. 4.1b: An incomplete work with different patterns



Fig. 4.1c: A completed patterning work

My first impressions in encountering Odun Lindu's work from the video was that each pattern is sewn across the fabric, and whether complete or incomplete these patterns seem to project an illusion of movement. For me, it is as if the patterns and strings are waiting, vibrating, and contacting each other in a living way, even though physically they remain static. To me, they are not merely functioning as part of the traditional costume accessory but a quintessence of knowledge representing the liveness of something changing and the flow of time itself through transformation.¹⁵

According to Odun Lindu, it takes at least six months (or even longer) to finish a fully-completed set of *linangkit* pattern work. This depends upon not only the level of the complexity or the size of the piece but also on the process of dialogue between the object and weaver. What fascinates me about this cultural practice is not only the physical pattern of the *linangkit* itself but the process and the action of the weaving. Each pattern is completed by a convergence of knots and lines and takes form through recursive interleaving between forces of tension and release, contraction and expansion, and augmentation and diminution of symmetrical and asymmetrically patterned surfaces. In the object, the patterned movement itself might be seen metaphorically as a meeting point in which cultures, dialogues, and creativities are intertwined. This creates a sense of movement and temporalities through which one might sense the intimacy of how the weaver's work reflects different emotional states as they bring about their creation.

¹⁵ It is believed that this highly labour-intensive, customized, hand-made, traditional woven patterning work and skill was somehow passed down from the Philippines (where it is named *Langkit*) and started flourishing within the *Rungus* community in the Kudat district (the northern area of Sabah). The meaning and the identity of the pattern has been extended over the years by the Indigenous people in North Borneo and been passed down from one generation to the next within local communities.

4.2 A new form of *linangkit* pattern: Sketching the structural organization of the oboe piece

I started my compositional work by imitating the structural design of a Lotud-style *linangkit*, creating a version that I treated as a platform for generating and organizing musical material (Fig. 4.2).

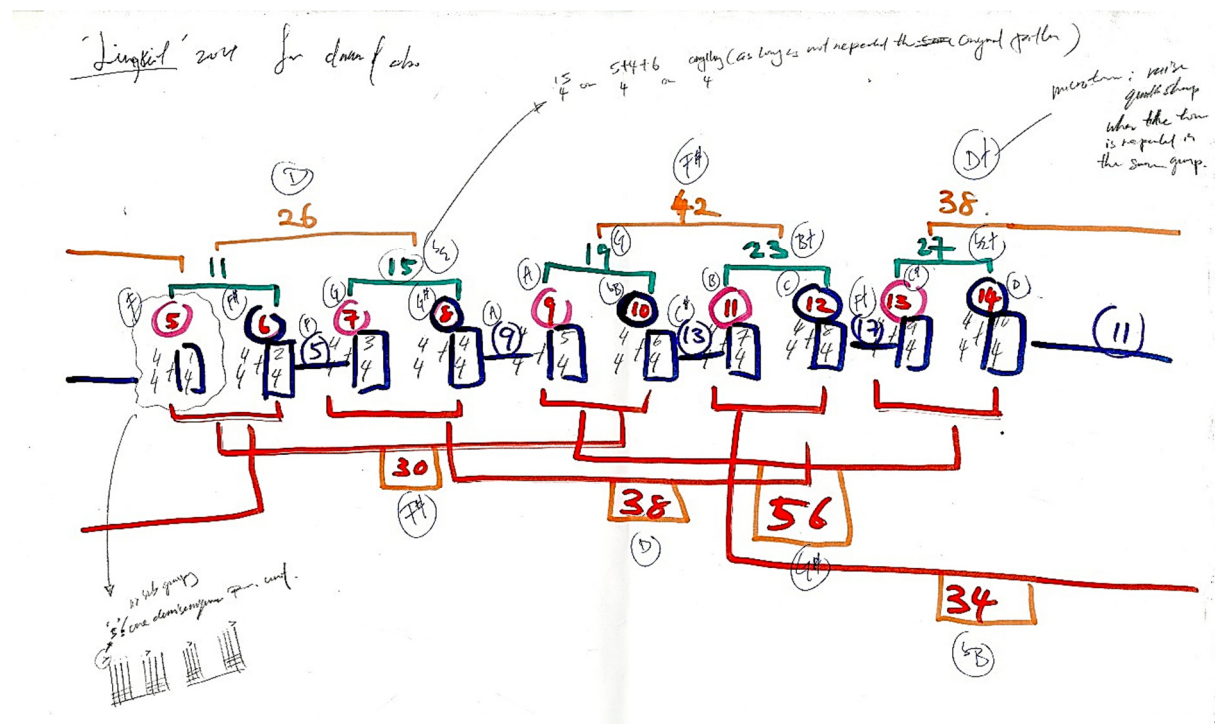


Fig. 4.2

Marked in colours, letters (representing a central pitch/mode), numbers (the total accumulative number of beats), lines, and brackets, this replica of the *linangkit* in musical form is formed by layers of patterns, creating an entangled, interlocking set of relationships. The first layer, which, in terms of its structural formation, was started at the middle ground, is formed of ten pairs of time signatures. Each pair consists of two different meters grouped by one common time and with different numerators ranging from one to ten, regarded as the basic pattern. I then increased the number of layers by joining and re-joining the basic patterns to form new pairings and layers (expressed as brackets in different colours). Seeking a different structural form and working modality, I also assimilated the way in which Sook Kuan translated and remodelled the musical notation and its material that I created in the

previous project, *Interbreathment*. By transferring each pattern and layer that I had built into a more extended rhythmic notation, the relationships between the patterns and the layers from the replica were distorted and adjusted. Patterns were mixed, relocated, and resituated in different measures to create the ‘skeleton’ of the rhythmic structure of the oboe solo piece (Fig. 4.3).

'Linangkit' (2014)

Chie Tsang LEE

Fig. 4.3

4.3 Rhythmic patterning

Inspired by Odun Lindu, the rhythmic patterning design and the process of its formation inherited the spirit, mode, and action of weaving. Taking the first ‘basic pattern’, for example (Fig 4.4), I treated the total accumulated beats ($4+1=5$) as a ‘needle’ and used it to organize the space and the spacing within the measures (4/4 and 1/4) by subdividing the notes into demi-semiquaver note values and grouping them with five demi-semiquaver notes as a unit marked with an accent (Fig. 4.4).



Fig. 4.4

Each unit is transformed into different note values including quaver, semi-quaver, and dotted semi-quaver by tying all the accented notes under the common time framework, giving rise to a new rhythmic surface (Fig. 4.5).



Fig. 4.5

This new rhythmic surface became the platform I used to organize register, in which the distance between accented notes was highlighted by replacing each accented note with pitches based on a pentatonic scale. This approach can be seen in Fig. 4.6, which shows the earlier sketching of my register organization across the first two 'basic patterns', which eventually became the first page in my oboe solo.



Fig. 4.6

As shown in the figure, each accented note from the patterns (within 38/4 and 4/4+1/4) has been replaced and substituted by a specific pitch based on a pentatonic scale determined by the alphabets taken from the earlier sketch (see Fig. 4.2). Here, the distances between the pitches within the first measure (38/4) have been repeated within an octave after a cycle, when the accented notes within the first pattern (38/4) are replaced by a D pentatonic scale, whereas the accented notes within the second pattern (4/4+1/4) have been substituted with pitches based on the F pentatonic scale.

These chains of pentatonic scales, however, operate not only at a local level in terms of decisions as to the note-to-note content of the work but are also used as focal points at a larger structural level at which the rhythms have been further developed in a rather abstract, subjective, and intuitive way. I borrowed several modes including different types of raga, maqam, and pentatonic-scales to reinforce the potential of the material. These materials were injected between the notes to create different forms of phrases so that the basic patterns gradually become more encrusted and ornamented. This approach can be seen in the following musical example (Fig. 4.7), which shows the outcome of the first page of the music in which, for example, instead of using thirty-eight beats as a unit, the first pattern's time signature within the measure has been subdivided and reassigned into five new individual measures (10+10+10+4+4).

Linangkit (2015)
for solo oboe
Dedicated to Peter Veale, Tang Sook Kuan, and Howard Ng Chie Tsang LEE

The musical score for *Linangkit* (2015) for solo oboe is presented across five staves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 42. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings (f, mf, p, mp, sfz). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 7/4 in bar 6.

Fig. 4.7: *Linangkit*, bar 1-7

The materials of each measure – such as the meters, pitches, registers, and rhythmic patterns, including phrases and rests and including the secondary subdivisions [4/4/1/4] in bar 6 and 7 – have been completely changed for practical reasons depending on the musical context as

well as the connectivity between the sounds. Each measure's material has been further developed by adding new rhythmic elements (such as triplets and septuplets) and decorative figures between the notes and the patterns onto the previous rhythmic layer I had built (see Fig. 4.6). These additions create a complex, repetitive, fragmented form of musical language formed by embedding various micro-intervals and ornaments including appoggiaturas, upper/lower mordents, and trills to create a recursive, recitative-like, vocalic contour of musical gestures and textures, offering me a sound world which related to the Sabah Indigenous ritual form of chanting, called '*rinait*' and sung by the *bobohizan* (the priest).

4.4 '*Siling*': Fabric as a temporal space contacting sound and silence

One of the important elements influencing the rhythmic drive of the piece is the way in which I approached the temporal fabric by using rests to create dialogues between sound and silence. This musical idea was actually inspired by one of the stitching techniques used to form a pattern called '*Siling*'. This kind of pattern is normally sewn at the surrounding edge of the *linangkit* pattern, with the weaver using needles as a support to create points across the fabric at different positions across which the knots and patterns are formed (Fig. 4.8).

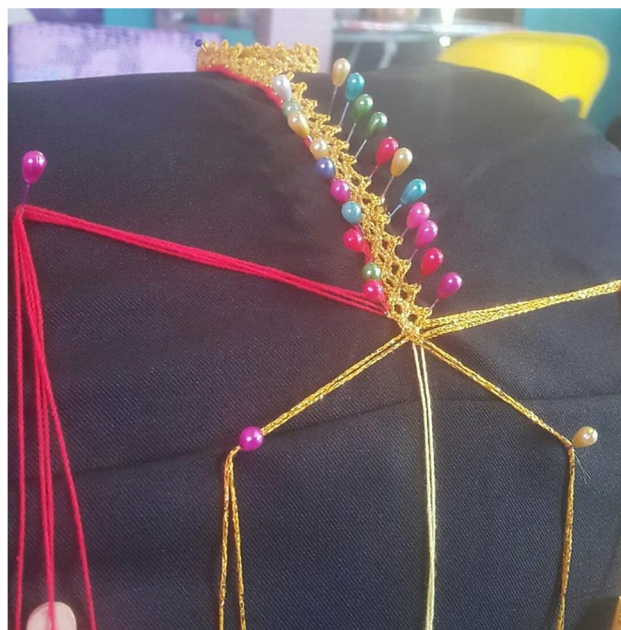


Fig. 4.8

Using the previous ‘accents’ to reinterpret the injection of this needling work, I find ways of highlighting new layers by de/re-constructing the rhythmic material within the patterns themselves. I try to recreate a piece of *Siling* as a background to my music by capturing the interweaving movement and action to evoke the way the weaver uses needles to create points across the space of the fabric upon which the strings move and crisscross. For example, taking and treating the rests as an imaginary needling work, I used them as a way to create points from bar 9 to 11 from which the material has been filtered by substituting notes with rests (Fig. 4.9).

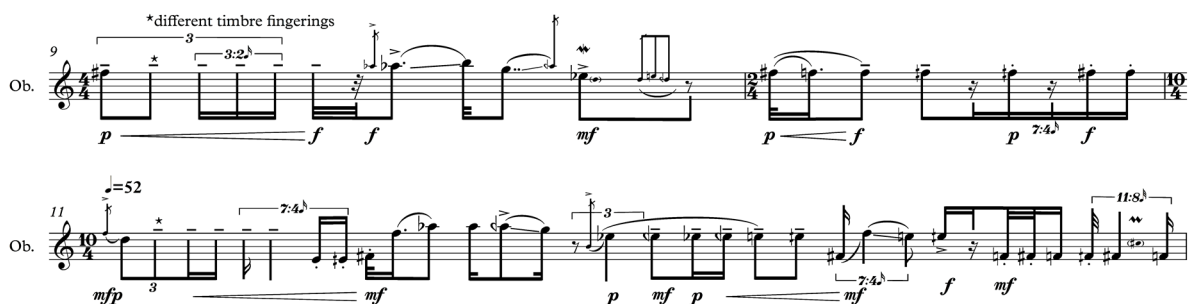


Fig. 4.9: *Linangkit*, bar 9-11

Some of the rests, interjected throughout the measures, were then further altered to unlock the spaces between them, creating different repetitive forms of musical gestures, patterns, and articulations across the measures. Such rest substitution techniques have been explored extensively with methods across many contemporary music repertoires notably including *Music for Eighteen Musicians* (1976) by Steve Reich, *Music in Fifths* (1969) by Philip Glass, and *In C* by Terry Riley. In Reich’s *Drumming* (1971), rests at the end of each section are substituted for notes, finally resulting in a single note per rhythmic cycle; however, the rests will be gradually substituted by the notes when the music builds up again. My way of approaching rhythm to such substitution technique differs, however, in that it is not meant to be operated and developed specifically under a certain mechanism but rather, works flexibly without being limited to a specific framework, so that the development of the material can flow even more organically.

Another musical element I have applied to broaden the spatiality can be seen in the following diagram (Fig. 4.10) in which I added another temporal surface by adding a fermata on the semi-quaver rest at the end of the passage in bar 19. The use of fermatas to expand the temporal identity of the semi-quaver rest creates an element of tension as it increases the degree of vagueness and uncertainty as to the impact of its temporal value, allowing the performer to re-adjust their energy whilst anticipating the next passage.



Fig. 4.10: *Linangkit*, bar 19-20

This fermata, conceptually, allows the performer to enter into an abstract space of being. The pause is a crossing point and here the performer acts to transmit something across the negative space between sounds. However, although the rests may appear as moments of silence in the music, to me, they are not meant to act passively. In fact, they are not static but are highly mobile. They add a moment of performative attention or liveness to the music. This can be seen in Fig. 4.11, in which whilst engaging the temporal identity on the last beat in bar 45 and 46 that have been affected by the fermata, the musician, rather like the weaver making and adjusting the patterns on their fabric, has to constantly readjust the time and space of their performance based on their musical sensitivity.

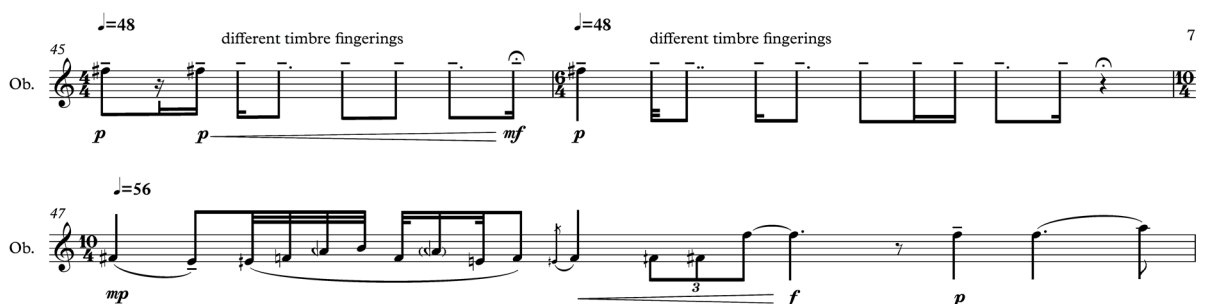


Fig. 4.11: *Linangkit*, bar 45-47

This spatial idea has been further extended by using different forms of triplets grouped with different values of rest and notes, including quaver, semi-quaver, and demi-semiquaver, to

form a larger phrase structure. This idea can be seen in Fig. 4.12 in which, starting from bar 55, the dialogues between phrases as well as the dialogues between the pitches and rests within the rhythmic pattern are interrupted by the fermatas.

Fig. 4.12: *Linangkit*, bar 55-58

This dialogue of crossing and integrating two distinctive territories between sounds and silence is presented in a completely different manner in later passages, starting from bar 59 in which timbral shifts emphasize the transformation of clear pitches from a solid to a fairly loose quality by decreasing the stability of the resonances of notes (Fig. 4.13)

Fig. 4.13: *Linangkit*, bar 59-61

4.5 Moving away from an embroidery form

In the collaborative process with the dancer and the oboist, we drew upon metaphors from weaving and sewing to spark ideas about a choreography of making, forming, and joining. At the end of the workshop session I decided to include a live performance along with an elastic

string installation in which I wanted to create a similar sense of foreground and background of objects embedded in physical layers. I was interested in recreating the experience from the gong project, *Interbreathment*, of musical textures in which the progression of events is multi-layered and irregular, multidimensional rather than only occurring on a single plane. Part of this sense of re-creating a multidimensional fabric or ‘embroidery form’ meant working closely with the dancer so that there was interplay between musical patterns and the patterning of movements and gestures from the dance.

In the live performance, the stage is treated as a fabric upon which sounds, movements, and expressions, are woven and sewn, with the score acting as a trigger for the musical activity. An important aspect driving the overall live performance was the creation of a sense of ritual ceremony through the organization of spatial formations that coordinated the musician and dancer. Throughout the events, the musician continually shapes and re-interprets the musical material, including the tempi, dynamics, and articulations from the score according to his musical sensibility and in response to the dancer’s movements and expressions. This performative manner became a strategy I used to open, extend, and organize the creativity between the performers and I invited the dancer to join in this re-creation process of various structures as a way to contribute her creativity.

In general the music and the staging atmosphere were presented in a rather unstable, loose, fragile manner and situation. The nature of this project was to treat it as an unfinished patterning work. The performance begins with a short, ceremonial opening in which the oboist, imitating ritual chanting, moves from perfect fifth interval of G to D to a slow augmented fourth glissando passage from G to C \sharp and ends with a multiphonic, whilst the dancer responds to the music through her listening, creating a series of repetitive weaving-like gestures and movements (Fig. 4.14).



Fig. 4.14

This notion of reciprocal relationship was used to drive the entire work, resulting in an unpredictable outcome based on the ‘mode’ of how the performers received, perceived, and responded to the changing situations of their environment. Interestingly, what I have observed and visualized through the experience of such an approach is that the overall collaborative performance seemed to be hybridizing the experiences inherited from the past. This was especially so when the dancer moved to the back of the stage, and started preparing her next performance by slowly tying the elastic string to her body (Fig. 4.15).



Fig. 4.15

During that particular moment of separation in the performance, an atmospheric dialogue of crossing different temporalities was created that I connect with the previous temporal idea articulated in my music of silence punctuating sound. This notion of preparing, waiting, and anticipating during the changing progression of the work again resonates with my experience of Odun's unfinished work as a way of showing how static situations punctuate moments and events.

4.6 The *Giring*¹⁶

One further aspect of the work that entered relatively late in the project was the use of *Kadazandusun* bells called *Giring*, or *Giring-giring* (Fig. 4.16).



Fig. 4.16: The *Giring* used in the collaborative session

These bells function as ritual instruments and are used by *Kadazandusun* priests (*Bobohizan*) to accompany their chanting. What so fascinated me about this ritual instrument is that it contains two distinctive sound worlds. Its unmuted sound has a rippling, shimmering quality, whereas the muted sound has by contrast a rather mellow, dark timbre and can create textures

¹⁶ A popular traditional costume accessory which can be found in most of the *kadazandusun* community as well as functioning as a ritual instrument used by local priests (*Bobohizan*) during ritual performances together with their chanting.

like speaking. In my work, this instrument became an essential element for signaling, directing, and accompanying the action (Fig. 4.17).

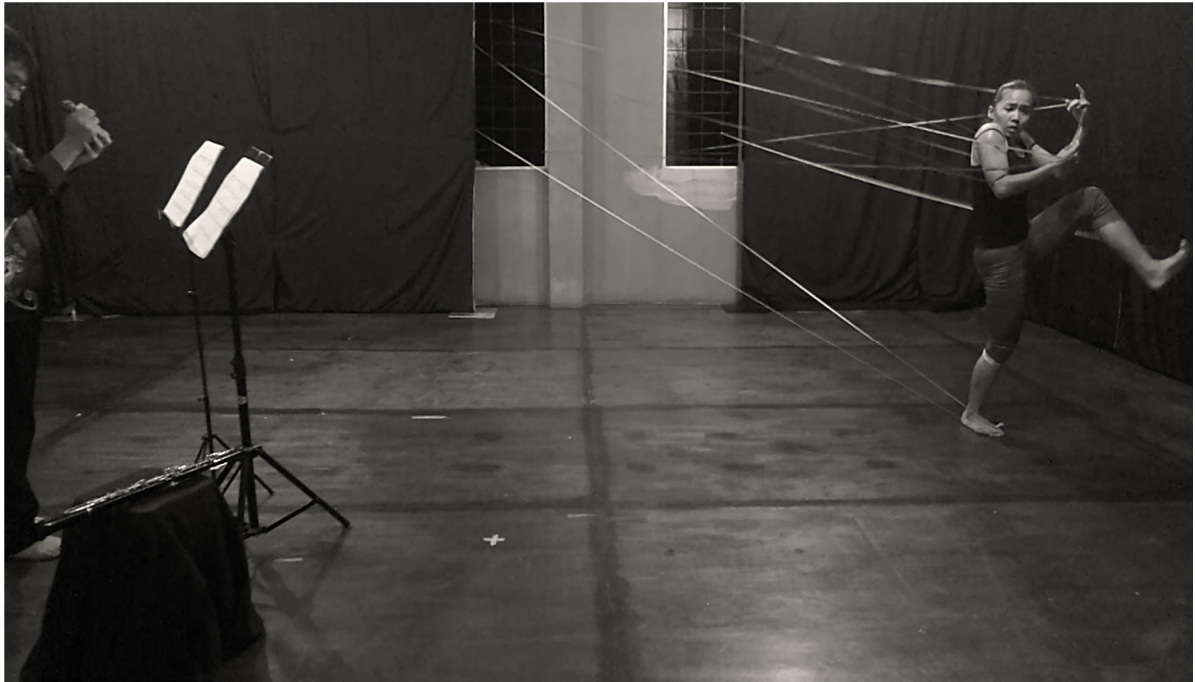


Fig. 4.17

The function and the identity of the bells, however, is changed in the latter section in which the dancer uses it as a musical instrument or sound generator to extend her physical language through hearing. This can be seen in the following image from the end of the performance. Here, the oboist has moved his position to the front of the stage to play a long, breathy, recitative passage without reed, whilst the dancer has taken the *giring* to use to extend her choreographical vocabulary, by constantly translating and re-translating the music from the oboe, which she expresses with both her body and the bells (Fig. 4.18).



Fig. 4.18

4.7 Further formats of the piece: Video and oboe solo

I further developed the project by creating a video based on the recording of the live performance. I filtered the background colour throughout the video (only black and red), adding different layering effects that mimic the fabric of the *linangkit* pattern (Fig. 4.19 [a-b]).



Fig. 4.19a



Fig 4.19b

The constantly changing shapes merge with the images of musician and dancer, creating a rather abstract visual translation as if the performers were becoming veiled within a piece of *linangkit*. I decided to complete this project by creating a stand-alone oboe solo called *Linangkit*. One of the major adjustments to this final version is that I wanted to reconstruct the previous dialogue between the dancer and musician in the bell section. However, instead

of having a two-person event, I created a ‘monologue’ by resituating the material in different spaces. I took the rhythmic material from the passage where the musician performed the breathy passage (see Fig. 4.13) to create a short opening passage (Fig. 4.20) that functioned like a ritual ceremony in which the musician performs the rhythmic passage with *giring*, so recalling the interactive dialogue between the dancer and the musician (see Fig. 4.18).

The musical notation for the *giring* solo consists of five staves, each labeled 'Giring' on the left. The notation includes various musical symbols, dynamics, and articulations:

- Staff 1:** Starts with a double bar line and a half note. Above the staff is a tempo marking '♩=66'. The staff contains several measures with notes, rests, and dynamic markings: *ppp*, *pp*, *pp*, *fp*, *sfz*, *f*, *ff*, *fp*, and *f*. There are also slurs and accents.
- Staff 2:** Starts with a double bar line and a half note. The staff contains several measures with notes, rests, and dynamic markings: *f*, *mf*, *ff*, *ffp*, and *fff*. There are also slurs and accents.
- Staff 3:** Starts with a double bar line and a half note. The staff contains several measures with notes, rests, and dynamic markings: *f*, *mp*, *f*, *ff*, *f*, and *ff*. There are also slurs and accents.
- Staff 4:** Starts with a double bar line and a half note. The staff contains several measures with notes, rests, and dynamic markings: *fff*, *sim.*, *fp*, *ff*, *pp*, *sim.*, and *fp*. There are also slurs and accents.
- Staff 5:** Starts with a double bar line and a half note. The staff contains several measures with notes, rests, and dynamic markings: *fp*, *f*, and *f*. There are also slurs and accents.

At the top of the page, there is a section labeled '-Silent- 8'' with a double bar line and a half note. At the bottom right, there is a section labeled '10' with a double bar line and a half note.

Fig. 4.20: the *giring* solo musical notation

Such a ‘dialogue’, however, will be suspended and will not be revealed until the section when the musician starts playing the long, breathy, recitative passage.

Chapter 5: Bead music: Entanglements and the unity of different elements

I saw that the experience of fragmentation was a form of the experience of unity; the apparent breakdown of continuity was actually a glimpse into the interior workings of integration. My body showed me that a dive into detailed fragmentation can allow for understanding of a richly counterpointed whole. (Caspersan, 2011, p. 94)

5.1 Introduction: The Borneo bead

Borneo bead culture, from my personal perspective, is the one of the most important expressions of Borneo culture. As a cultural tradition, it has represented the identities of the individual, family, and tribe, as well as the states and nations of the island (Sarawak, Sabah, Brunei, and Indonesia). It has shared meanings, functions, and values among the Indigenous people of Borneo: the *Ulu*, *Bidayuh*, *Iban*, *Klabit*, *Kadazandusun*, *Melanao*, *Dayak*, and *Nhaju* (Munan, 2005). I am fascinated by the history of these beads and how as trade goods they have been transformed into cultural relics and used in ceremonies for rites of passage, as wealth and status symbols, transferable as investments, and even as fines (2005, Munan). As an exchange mechanism of both material and spiritual wealth, beads are used to build social networks that expand from a local to an international platform through several activities including marriage, trade, and ritual ceremony.

Today, this traditional culture faces a serious crisis of discontinuity. Compared with Sarawak (West Borneo), over the decades, the Borneo bead culture in my country, Sabah (North Borneo), seems relatively less popular to the public due to the lack of interest of the younger generation (Goroh, personal communication, November 2015). Although one might be able to access some information from the internet, it is very difficult to obtain deeper knowledge about this cultural object, especially as an outsider, because most of the traditional beads in Indigenous families, especially those used for sacred purposes, are highly valued and treated as secret, private sorts of cultural possessions. However, even though replicas of this

traditional bead handicraft have become popular as tourist souvenirs, I knew little about their history until late September 2015 when I came in contact with Eleanor Goroh, who is a professional bead artist and cultural activist for local Indigenous cultural traditions in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

In responding to this traditional object on a personal level, my first concern – as with all the intercultural work that I have done – was to try to understand the element of ‘in-betweenness’ that might reside in the contact with traditional practice. Given the discontinuities and breaks with the tradition, what sorts of relationships and values from the past might still be inherited and remain coherent even as their identity and meaning exists in an ambiguous state of flux? As a composer, how might I respond to this traditional cultural object in my music and thinking? I felt irresistibly drawn to the objects of this tradition in a physical and practical way, and made contact with Goroh during a trip to my hometown in Sabah in November 2015.

5.2 Contacting the beads: a paradoxical world

In order to explore the qualities of the Borneo beads and ways of thinking about combinatorial structures, I visited Goroh at her studio, where she provides one-to-one workshops for novices called the ‘Magic Borneo Beads’. In the workshop, I was particularly interested in the entanglement structure of how she worked with different types of beads.¹⁷ My first impression was that despite a complementarity between the beads through loose repetition of elements, there were some beads placed oddly. And what attracted my attention in these beading works were those that projected a strong visual impact because of either dissonance or consonance of elements (Fig 5.1).

¹⁷ Many of the beads and objects which Goroh has applied in her works were not made locally (Sabah) and were imported from elsewhere, including Chinese coins, elements from the traditional beaded headdress (a dragon-like headdress), and ear rings from *Ulu* people or native *Dayak* ethnic groups of Sarawak (Borneo). Also present were beads called *Jatim* or *Majapahit* from Java Timor or East Java and different coloured glass beads from China.



Fig. 5.1: One of Goroh's bead works

In Borneo bead culture, as in other such traditional practices, the bead's structural order within a work has its own meaning. It can be a metaphor symbolizing a family lineage, with key beads representing the power of the authority of an elder or ancestor of a family (though this is not always the case, especially nowadays). The central bead is often treated as the 'heart' of the bead work, being the most powerful bead amongst others, and signifies the authority and identity of the wearer. Of strong interest to me here is how the meaning of the narrative of the beads and their identity can be completely changed and re-established by the arrangement of a new central bead.

The artistic design in this work is highly personal and strongly connected to the maker's experience and practice. The structural form and the arrangement of the elements are highly flexible. As part of the creative practice of this cultural object, it is customary for the Borneo Indigenous people to re-adjust and freely replace elements of their bead work over time simply by adding and mixing together different types of beads, new and old, based on the owner's decision. This phenomenon can be seen in Fig. 5.2, which shows a traditional 'bead tail' worn by *Iban* women.

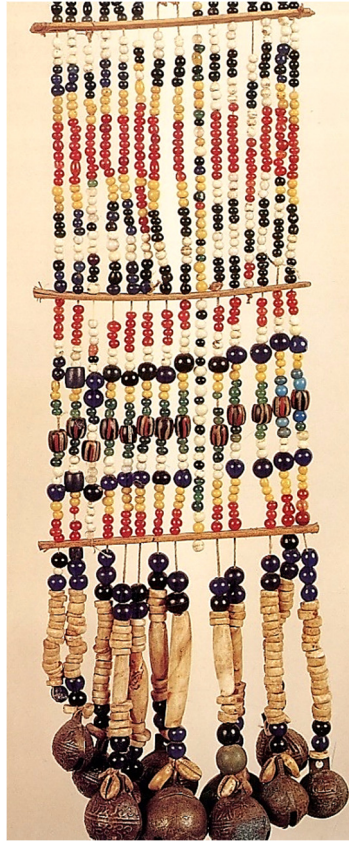


Fig. 5.2: A ‘bead tail’ worn either separately or as part of a beaded collar by *Iban* women during festivals

Here, in terms of its structural design, even though the appearance of this traditional bead work seems well organized and structured, the patterns within the work are not actually formed in symmetrical ways. Rather the arrangements are asymmetrical: the basic order has been reorganized by inserting, removing, and replacing beads. This process of emerging interjections into a familiar order creates a sense of different ‘unknown zones’. It is one way of treating the beadwork as a living object where the identity of the work is continually reshaped and developed, folding new narratives through the repurposing of elements. This notion of a discontinuity of continuity projected by the changing order creates a blurring that connotes a world of flux, of shifting between the past, present, and future. These are objects whose energy of authenticity arises from the way the elements have been exchanged, shared, transformed, and intertwined as their form is reconstituted over time. I found that this multiple concept of unity through brokenness and disruption integrates with my own interest

in working compositionally with different elements to highlight and integrate a fluid, complex inner world of architectural form.

5.3 The bead music concept

The project that resulted from this period of research, *Bead[s]/(by bead[s]*, will be the central focus of this chapter and will be discussed together with two earlier works of mine: *[Re]sketch[es] no.3 – Nunuk Ragang*¹⁸ and *Sympathetic [re]sonance*¹⁹. I again sought to hone my awareness of the relationship between the cultural practices around beads as spiritual objects of the Indigenous people in Borneo, and my compositional thinking. I transferred my experiences with the beads into musical questions: what sort of musical ‘beads’ would I choose; how could I arrange them to make my first ‘bead music’ (so to speak). This led me to think about what sorts of functions and relationships are created between sounding events when they are bound together, and what emerges formally when different musical materials are joined and re-joined. This project belongs to an early stage of my experiments with bringing knowledge, understanding, ideas, and experiences around the beading concept into my musical practice. My interest and approach, at least at this stage, was not about establishing a national identity or representing a specific culture; neither was my primary intention to create a complex musical notation or highlight the independent development of musical materials. Rather, my interest was in cultivating a practice of

¹⁸ *Nunuk Ragang* explores the origin myth of the *Kadazandusun* centred on a memorial built by the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA) to reunite the multi-ethnic *Kadazandusun* communities located near *Tampias*, which people believed to be the original settlement grounds of the legendary ancestral village. This cultural artefact becomes an important new cultural symbol, preserving and sustaining identity and cultural belief within this transformative modern era.

¹⁹ *Sympathetic [re]sonance*, a short four-minute piano solo piece commissioned by the Chopin Society Malaysia for the 6th ASEAN International Chopin Piano Competition, explores the acoustic sound world of *Ravanhattha* (a traditional Rajasthani string instrument). Part of the musical material was actually inspired and borrowed from a poem called *Oath Stones* written by Eleanor Goroh herself.

exchange in which I intended to find a way of musical thinking, perhaps a rather non-Western one, to deepen my cultural understanding as well as my compositional knowledge in relation to this Borneo bead culture. The aim of this chapter is not to present a putting-everything-together work but to discover another musical aesthetic, a unity that has been blurred and separated yet which can be formed and reunited beyond the cultural surface.

5.4 *Bead[s](by bead[s])*

Bead[s](by bead[s]) is a chamber work written for string quartet and piano and was premiered by the Bozzini Quartet and Philip Thomas on 11th February 2016 in St. Paul's Hall in Huddersfield. The piece's structure as well as its sound world was inspired by two different poems: one written by Eleanor Goroh herself and one by Rūmī, the eminent 13th-century Persian poet.

Thousands of them were buried with beads,
The secret passage the beads will give,
They may be small now, small thoughts, small things,
In time they grow old like any human being,
Thousands of beads on many untied strings,
Pick them up, put them on, feel the presence it brings,
A present a gift a tradition that sings,
Old songs forgotten but never ending.
- Eleanor Goroh

The clear bead at the center changes everything.
There are no edges to my loving now.
I've heard it said there's a window that opens from one mind to another,
But if there's no wall,

There's no need for fitting the window, or the latch.

-Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, Tr. C. Barks & J. Moyne, 'Open Secret'

Fig. 5.3

I took as a primary resource a short piano solo piece of mine, *Sympathetic [re]sonance*, and fragmented it into several sections. Each section was separated whilst maintaining its sequential order. The gaps between the sections were then 're-bound' by inserting some selected musical materials from *[Re]sketch[es] no.3 – Nunuk Ragang* as well as adding other new musical materials, though some of the borrowed materials were also been slightly changed and adjusted in relation to pitches, dynamics, and registers. While structuring the piece, I intended to work with combinatorial structures as well as the notion of the completeness of the beads within the work. I wanted to create beauty through simplicity to maintain a reasonable connection between my music and the ideas I had about the cultural object. The sound world I chose to present in this piece, therefore, is rather simple, direct, and concrete, like that I experienced in Goroh's bead necklace. The arrangement of its structural order was inspired by my perception of the *Iban* traditional 'bead tail' with its irregular, repetitive patterning. My patterning of sound, therefore, is made up of criss-crossing, overlapping, and unfolding elements in different sections like the beads within the *Iban* work in which asymmetrical repetitive structures establish an inner connectivity. The result in terms of the narrative context of the *Bead[s](by bead[s])* is thus of musical materials from two earlier pieces that have been overlapped and intercut, leading to a new sense of connection and relationship.

The beginning of this piece (bars 1–8) is a solo shared by the two violins presented in a rather simple, static, and austere manner, connoting images of beads being strung and placed between others. The suggested structure of crossing from one bead to another is taken

up by the alternating violins. The work begins with the second violin playing a long sustained note on G \sharp moving to a major third dyad (F and A) and then a double stopped A (Fig 5.4).

Figure 5.4 shows the musical score for the first three bars of the piece. The score includes staves for Piano, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 42. Violin 2 plays a long sustained note on G \sharp , which then moves to a major third dyad (F and A) and then a double stopped A. The dynamics are marked as *pp*, *mf*, *dolce*, and *p*. The score also includes a section for Violin 2 starting at bar 2, marked with a 2 and a *h.sul pont* instruction, and a section for Violin 2 starting at bar 3, marked with a 3 and a *h.sul pont* instruction. The tempo is marked as *A tempo*.

Fig. 5.4: *Bead[s](by bead[s]*, bar 1-3

The first violin then takes over the solo in bar 5, repeating the first statement transposed down a major third whilst intensifying its character (Fig. 5.5).

Figure 5.5 shows the musical score for bars 5 and 6 of the piece. The score includes staves for Violin 1 and Violin 2. Violin 1 plays a long sustained note on G \sharp , which then moves to a major third dyad (F and A) and then a double stopped A. The dynamics are marked as *pp*, *mf*, *dolce*, and *p*. The score also includes a section for Violin 1 starting at bar 6, marked with a 2 and a *h.sul pont* instruction, and a section for Violin 1 starting at bar 7, marked with a 3 and a *h.sul pont* instruction. The tempo is marked as *A tempo*.

Fig. 5.5: *Bead[s](by bead[s]*, bar 5-6

This introductory dialogue is then transformed into a somewhat ritual choral musical style and texture that functions as an invitation to anticipate the first piano fragment taken from my piano solo work *Sympathetic [re]sonance* (Fig. 5.6).

11 (without pedal) 5

Pno. *mp* *f* *mp*

Vln. 1 *mf* *p* *mf* ord.

Vln. 2 *mf* *p* *mf* ord.

Vla. *p* ord.

Vc. *p* ord. pizz.

Fig. 5.6: *Bead[s](by bead[s])*, bar 11-12

Part of the musical material includes rhythmic patterns and pitches transcribed from a recording of Goroh chanting a poem she wrote called ‘Oath Stones’ (Fig. 5.7).

$\text{♩} = 46$

Ba tu hi jau *mf* *espress.*

bi ru bi ru wa r na un gu

Ba tu ke cil *mf*

A ku su sun sa tu sa tu

Fig. 5.7: An extract of my transcription of the recording of Goroh’s chanting

This highly expressive folk-like chanting, based on a pentatonic skeleton structure, was created by several phrases formed of different decorative ornaments and articulations through repetition. In my transcription process, I tried to capture Goroh's articulations and the recursive unfolding of the poem. From there, I drew on the original, focusing on characteristic elements such as intervals, patterns, or even just a single note, and used these to generate several rather compact musical gestures instead of copying the whole from the recording. These musical gesture or fragments were for me like live objects, capsules that provided me with a great flexibility for generating ideas and materials during the process of creation. Although the translation of these fragments may seem abstract and even problematic due to the differences between my version and the original especially in my filtering out of the sliding effect, one might be able to perceive a certain connection in terms of the mood, certain gestural impulses, or even the morphing quality in the music even though the architectural structure, the pitch organization as well as the colours are seemingly unrelated to the recording. Taking an example from the beginning of the piano passage in bars 12–18 (see Fig. 5.6), I used two minor third and augmented second intervals (G#/B and Bb/C#) and treated them as a fundamental motif, using triplet rhythmic pulses within the measure to create a similar character to Goroh's articulations in her chanting. These two rather short musical gestures reappear between bars 12 to 18, resulting in a fleeting, somewhat delayed pulse and chanting expression which is then extended and transformed into different forms, scales, and textures to unfold the entire musical dialogue. I reinforced the musical gesture, rebuilding the contour from Goroh's chanting, by using triplet rhythmic patterns and borrowing pitches from an Arabic mode (Fig. 5.8) centralized on Bb as a symbolic motive to signify the character of Goroh's chanting, which resulted in a cluster of repetitive musical gestures.

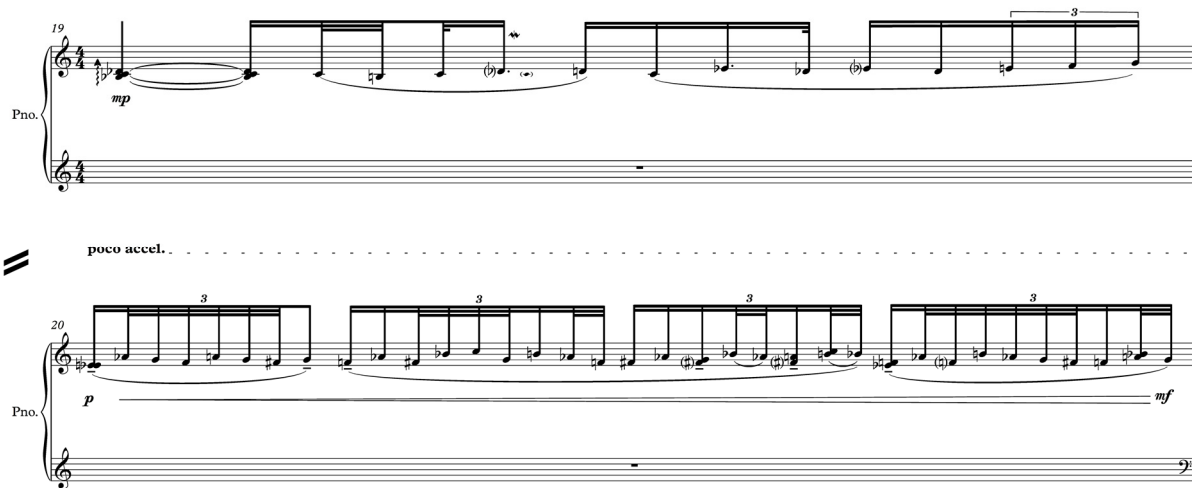


Fig. 5.8: *Bead[s]/(by bead[s]*, bar 19-20

This repetitive, scale-like musical material starting from bar 19 was formed by fragments and phrases and gradually develops organically into a rather complex rhythmic formation in the latter passage from bar 21 until 30, further expanding the materials of bars 19 and 20. These elements are presented in a rather flexible, spontaneous manner, creating a sense of intangible forces contracting and expanding within which rhythmic patterns, accents, and rests intertwine (Fig. 5.9).

Fig. 5.9: *Bead[s]/(by bead[s]*, bar 21-23

This sense of fluidity creating contrast defamiliarizes the relationship between the original materials and is further distanced in the following passage in which I created dialogues between friction, noises, and pitches with harmonics (Fig. 5.10).

29 $\text{♩} = 46$ 11

Pno. *mp* *sfz* *ppp* *p* *p* l.v.

1 2

$\text{♩} = 60$

Ritualistic situation (the string quartet should enter this section before the piano resonances end)
Tutti: left-hand damped on the string (breath noise only, without definite pitch)

Vln. 1 III slow bow breath noise slow bow normal bow *ppp* *mp* *ff* *sempre* on the string *ff* *sempre*

Vln. 2 III breath noise normal bow *ppp* *ff* *sempre* on the string *ff* *sempre*

Vla. III breath noise slow bow normal bow *ppp* *mp* *ff* *sempre* on the string *ff* *sempre*

Vc. III slow bow breath noise normal bow *ppp* *ff* *sempre* on the string *ff* *sempre*

Fig. 5.10: *Bead[s](by bead[s], bar 29-32*

Here, from bars 31 to 48 after a long sustaining Bb pedal note from the piano, the ensemble plays as a kind of meta-instrument inspired by the image from the traditional ‘bead tail’ worn by *Iban* women. The music was notated with cross-note heads with rhythmic patterns and dynamics imitating the sound world of the *giring* (see Chapter 4). My intention in using such notation, however, is neither about restraining the performer’s physicality nor a comment on determinacy but is about creating an ambiguous state of flux. Throughout the passage, the string quartet was presented in a tutti manner resulting in an unexpected sparkling, surprising, fluorescent sound quality that expressed a cohesive tension of entanglement between discontinuity and continuity, creating layers and textures with different sonic behaviours that cross between static and non-static, noise and pitch, positive and negative forces.

The beginning of this section is situated within a quiet, ritualistic atmosphere in which the string musicians were asked to create a long, quiet, turbulent musical passage by manipulating the muting string technique, moving and crossing different natural harmonic

positions whilst accentuating different accents with the bow to produce effects between frictions and natural harmonics. This highly unstable texture of brokenness and disruption between noise and pitch is what I play with in the notation I used to create a larger scale work. This can be seen especially in bar 33, for example, when the sounds and the spatiality within the framework, moving from one to multiple dimensions, have been rearticulated and overlapped, projecting unexpected natural harmonics to create interlocking musical layers (Fig. 5.11).

The figure displays a musical score for a string quartet, specifically for bars 33 and 34. The staves are labeled Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., and Vc. (Violoncello). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. In bar 33, there are markings for *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *ff* (fortissimo), along with the instruction *sempre*. In bar 34, the notation is more complex, featuring a series of notes and rests, with a *ff* marking and the instruction *sempre*. Above the staves, there are performance instructions: 'normal bow' and 'long bow', with arrows indicating the duration of each bow stroke. The score is presented in a clear, professional layout, with a double bar line separating the two measures.

Fig. 5.11: *Bead[s](by bead[s])*, bar 33-34

Diving into this notion of brokenness and disruption of continuity and discontinuity even further, the notion of cohesiveness is regenerated into another sound world in which I opened several cracks and gaps between the sounds, reducing elements to more concrete form to create a question-answer dialogue between the quartet and the piano. Here I also bring in the sound world of another previous work of mine, *[Re]sketch[es] no.3 – Nunuk Ragang*, to seek a form of relationship, connection, or association through exchange (Fig.5.12).

18 $\text{♩} = 60$
 *The string quartet should enter this section before the piano resonances end

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system, labeled with measure numbers 52, 53, 54, and 55, shows a string quartet (Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc.) and a piano (p). The string quartet parts are marked with dynamics *p*, *mf*, *f*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *fp*, and *f*. The piano part is marked with dynamics *p*, *mf*, *f*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *fp*, and *f*. The second system, labeled with measure numbers 54 and 55, shows the string quartet holding a sustained chord (S) while the piano plays a long sustained chord (mp). A 'give cue' is marked at bar 55.

Fig. 5.12: *Bead[s]*(by *bead[s]*), bar 52-55

In terms of its sound, the piano behaves more like a string instrument, creating a long sustained chord, whereas the quartet acts more like a piano, creating an intermittent-insect sound world, using the hair comb as a guiro to bow the strings (Fig. 5.13).

The music, in bars 61–69, begins with an oscillation formed by a compound minor third between Bb and Db, imitating a ritual chant and giving this section a rather concrete and dramatic performativity. Formed of triplets and septuplets, this recurring gestural vocable functions as a bridge to the following passage starting at bar 69. This creates tensions between expansion and contraction through repetition through which the music is cut off after bar 64 to channel the energy into a single note at bar 65, reinforcing the recitative character by centralizing the Bb through repetition. This single note repetition, however, is further developed into different textures whilst pushing and increasing the intensity through speeds, dynamics, and articulation until the last beat at bar 69, where the piano solo passage is terminated by an interjection from the string quartet (Fig. 5.15).

The figure displays a musical score for two systems. The first system, labeled with bar numbers 68 and 21, features a piano (Pno.) part in 4/4 time. It begins with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Db, Bb) marked *mf*, followed by a septuplet of eighth notes (Bb, Db, Bb, Db, Bb, Db, Bb) marked *sfz*. The second system, labeled with bar numbers 69 and 70, shows the piano part continuing with a single note (Bb) marked *ff*, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Db, Bb) marked *sfz*. The string quartet (Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc.) enters in bar 69 with a repetitive, woody sound using glissandi friction effects, marked *mf*. The instruction "Tutti: with hair comb (friction only)" is written above the string parts. The string parts end in bar 70 with a final note marked *ff*.

Fig. 5.15: *Bead[s]/(by bead[s]*, bar 68-70

Here, the strings create a repetitive, woody sound with glissandi friction effects by utilizing the straight edge of the hair comb on the strings instead of the teeth (Fig. 5.16).



Fig. 5.16

This particular sound world recreates the dialogues of bars 49–60 (see Fig. 5.12) and bars 71–83, as a way of sustaining repetitive forces built from the piano, even though the materials – pitches, rests, rhythmic patterns and textures – have been changed (Fig. 5.17).

The musical score for Figure 5.17 is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 71 to 83. It features five staves: Piano (Pno.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The Piano part is marked 'completely silent' from measure 71 to 83. The string parts (Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc.) play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked with a tempo of $\text{♩}=60$. Dynamics range from fff to mf . The second system covers measures 74 to 84. The Piano part is active, marked pp and p , with 'key noise effect' indicated. The string parts continue their rhythmic pattern, with a 'give cue' instruction at the end.

Fig. 5.17: *Bead[s](by bead[s]*, bar 71-74

The dialogue within the quartet becomes even more blurred and abstract when the strings enter a somewhat free, open notation section in bar 77 in which they create and form their own voices and languages using the hair comb to improvise responses to a text instruction

Friction only (play with hair comb)

completely silent

Improvise only with hair comb
(applying all the previous articulations, techniques, and sound world)
(like dialogue)

completely silent

77

30"

7"

In response to Goroh and Rūmī's poem, I have inserted a 'centre bead' at the end of the music in bar 98 in the form of a long echoing effect (Fig. 5.19).

rit. $\text{♩} = 46$ wait until the resonances end

Pno. *ff* wait until the resonances end

completely silent

Fig. 5.19: *Bead[s](by bead[s]*, bar 96-98

The bead here is a silent event that creates an open-ended and ended-opened world in which the audience (the listener as well as the performers) might experience the ‘afterness’ of a memory process in the fading resonances built by a long repetitive, interlocking form of musical patterns and textures that imitate the beating of the *Kadanzandusun* gong (Fig. 5.20 [a-b]).

poco rit. $\text{♩} = 60$

Pno. *mf* (finger pedal) *mp*

poco rit. *mf*

Fig. 5.20a: *Bead[s](by bead[s]*, bar 85-88

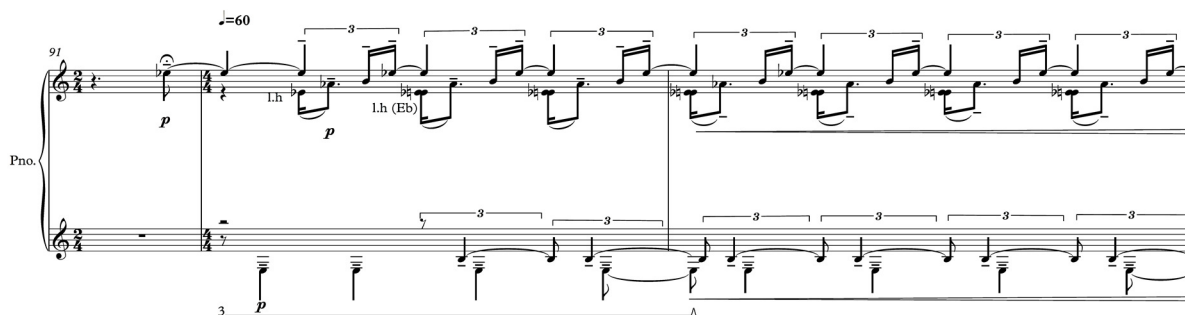


Fig. 5.20b: *Bead[s](by bead[s])*, bar 91-93

For me the internal dialogue of a listener within the space of silence after sound is highly private, rather like the relationship between the beads and the bead maker. The magical moment from the centre bead will not be activated without attentiveness from the listener. Perhaps this is rather utopian, but I am interested in the effect of a listener who submits themselves to a process in which listening activates memories and imagination and a sense of travelling in-between the familiar and the unknown.

To avoid being accused of picking, choosing, and utilizing musical material from others, I have utilized elements from my own work *[Re]sketch[es] no.3 – Nunuk Ragang* and *Sympathetic [re]sonance*. This approach to making music by using fragments that take on new life in other musical contexts is of course a well-trodden path. One useful example can be seen in one of Peter Ablinger's works, *Mao Tse-Tung*, from his 'Voices and piano cycle' which explores the relationship between the notion of separation and unification between human and instrumental voices. He makes use of musical quotation to create a tension between the resonance of familiarity and the dissonance of new contexts to expand the musical structure in which the narrative of the musical material is utilized to revivify and cultivate the surface beyond the differences through a reciprocal relationship through which a new musical dialogue is established. This concept of a symbiotic relationship between the voice and the piano is constantly echoed in Peter Ablinger's discussion of his cycle *Voices and Piano*. In his programme note, he says that

[T]he relation of the two is more a competition or comparison. Speech and music is compared. We can also say: reality and perception. Reality/speech is continuous, perception/music is a grid which tries to approach the first. Actually the piano part is the temporal and spectral scan of the respective voice, something like a coarse gridded photograph. Actually the piano part is the analysis of the voice.

What Ablinger describes is a sense of ambiguous form and tension of unity that arises through a symbiotic relationship between the text and the piano through which a new structural form and identity are anticipated and formed by an entanglement of brokenness and disruption formed and the re-shaped by a new framework that filters it. It is the inheritance of the authenticity of an element whose identity has been reset, reconstituted, and transcended into another new form of 'authenticity', whose differences are actually not meant to be separated or distanced from each other. That reconstitution of elements establishes a connectivity that integrates a new dialogue between new and old, traditional and modern. What interests me with this kind of concept and perhaps differentiates my work from examples by other composers, is neither the notion of compartmentalization (Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, 1998) nor the differentiation of the materials, nor even the notion of 'putting narrative together' (Heap, 2012), but rather the resilient process of how the music can be repurposed so that each sound world, as it is situated side by side with something that seemingly might not have a specific connection to it, creates an accommodation of the dissonances of discontinuity and continuity. The key point here is a way of remodeling, reconnecting, and re-establishing the relationship between things without their brokenness and disruptions being eliminated. The scars in-between the gaps that have been reconciled create, to my mind, a sense of longing and ambiguous questioning. I am interested in keeping this voidness, a sense of the cracks between sound worlds, open and dynamic as an essential part of the music's character. Although some of the musical passages have been presented in

a rather static way, the music itself is in a continual process of organic formation. There is an entanglement and interlocking of musical materials from two pieces whose narratives have been broken and disrupted, yet, at the same time, in the process of looking for new linkages, these fragments are constantly reforming and re-establishing new identities, creating a paradoxical memory and sensation in experiencing a world of in-betweenness through the notion of remembering (Shaw, 2016; Scheurreger, 2014). This complex transformative activity of constantly and continually shifting between closing and opening expresses the core of my compositional aesthetics: an interstitial world between past, present, and future, a longing underlined by different ranges of anticipatory qualities that try to touch on the formation and the sensation of one's memory and experience. Through the re-articulation of a given element through its placement, a new identity is constituted, which for me links to the way the forces and energies of beads within Goroh's bead necklace work as well as how the traditional *Iban* bead tail creates its meanings. Just as Caspersan expresses a sense of unity through the fragmentation of movements in her physical world, in working with ideas drawn from my contact with the Borneo beads, I experience a new found sense of interconnection between sounding elements through the process of breaking up and resetting musical materials.

Conclusion

I have resisted concluding my thesis as a ‘finished-work’, for this work is a continual process of self-discovery around transcultural thinking. My research of the last 5 years has broadened my artistic perception and practice particularly in relation to the idea of wayfaring shaping an ever more complex understanding of the dimensions of ‘in-betweenness’ in which cultural identity, language, and creativity intertwine, transform, and evolve holistically through an emergent process. Each project throughout the journey reflects the changing process of my musical identity through cultural dialogues and has in turn opened up new opportunities for me to reconnect to my cultural background and values, suggesting new ways of learning that enlarge the skills and capacities of the participants. This has led me to re-position myself as a composer in my engagement with individuals and communities so that composition becomes primarily focussed on musical dialogues through collaboration.

In retrospect, the starting point of my research in response to Tim Ingold’s writings on how skill relates to the practice of cultural exchange, and how I applied this to *Interbreathment* was the breakthrough moment. This encounter with the power of collaborative exchange became even stronger during the performances when the materials and the energies activated between the performers were further intertwined and dissolved in terms of the identity of where creative ideas originate. What I recognised from such encounters is that the musical score I created for the dancers, for example, has a certain limitation that could only be the partial beginning point and that by opening my process up to real-time score making in rehearsals with the musicians and the dancer (for whom real-time making is commonplace), I could achieve a new level of expressive power and meaning in my music.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the practice of transcultural thinking underlining a process of blurring techniques to re-examine the fine line between the levels, manners, and etiquette

of cultural exchange. What I can see from *Interfusion V – A Song for Herh*, to *Re-sketch(es)*, and to *Re-sketch(es) II-resurrection* is a recurring interest in expanding the level of ambiguity through interactive forces between determinacy and indeterminacy. Such forces, suggesting possibilities to create forms and dialogues between cultures, dynamisms, and articulations through musical activities, led me to rethink my understanding of the complexity of my mother tongue in Chapter 3 where I reclaimed the value of incompleteness in transmission from which I created a self-dialogue in my work called *Yu Moi*. I highlighted the sense of ambiguity of translation processes in aural/oral traditions through the recursive movements in which oral learning takes place – copying, responding, practicing, and re-translating – processes that represent the fluidity of the life of the culture itself. What I realized was that the dynamic forces creating errors, vagueness, and ‘surprises’ strongly resonated with my own personal challenges in speaking an unfamiliar dialect (Hakka), by which meanings are hybridized through the learning process. The key insight for me is that through the process of receiving the pure ‘knowledge’ from a predecessor, the successor adds to and refines that knowledge themselves. This placed me into a new relation to understanding how cultural materials are transmitted in which I could find paths forward for my work.

The fourth and the fifth chapters explored cultural objects including Sabah’s traditional Indigenous forms of embroidery and the Borneo bead culture. Both chapters address the core of my compositional aesthetics in cultivating a practice of exchange in which I realised the power of cultural resilience in materials and how their meanings can be sustained and rejuvenated. This movement of exchange, involving a complex transformative activity that continually signifies a movement of closing and opening, expanded my compositional technique around processes of breaking up and resetting musical materials, helping me to arrive at a more abstract structural understanding of the specific cultural materials. Most importantly, such experiences opened up another window for me to look at

other possibilities of how one's musical inner voices can be extended, implied, and interacted with in different dimensions.

Since the completion of my portfolio works, I have continued to dive into deeper levels of work around transcultural thinking articulated even further in a number of new collaborative projects that work across a number of different scales, settings, and modalities. These include a music and dance collaboration, a further collaboration with Indigenous beading traditions for an installation work, and instrumental writing that combines Chinese and Western instruments in chamber and orchestral settings. My most recent project, realised at the Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music in Bangkok, Thailand during the 'Music and Socio-Cultural Development of the ASEAN' International Symposium, gave me the opportunity to work with musicians from Southeast Asia together with members from Ensemble Studio Musikfabrik led by Peter Veale, and I have been commissioned to write an ensemble piece combining Western and Eastern instruments (mainly Southeast Asian) including *saluang*, *sampek* (doubling *sampelong*), *khaen*, 36-pipe soprano *sheng* oboe, bassoon, horn, *saung-gauk*, *pat waing*, *roneat*, *ranad ek*, percussion, *erhu*, and cello. Here, I extended my working process from my earlier working experience with the Atlas Ensemble, reconstructing elements of the notational structures I created for the earlier project to expand the complexity of nuance in the structures by using each participant's capacity as a singer to shape the interactions and dialogues in improvisational fashion.

This notion of interactivity points to future artistic investigations focused on developing ideas around forms of listening connected to Southeast Asian cultural objects, and aesthetics, particularly the idea of a silent inner 'monologue' that shapes expressive articulations and timing in ensemble interactions. This can be seen, for example, in another recent project of mine called *Komburongo* (sweet flag plant), a piece written for a trio of percussionists in which I extended my interest in the Borneo bead exploring one of the sacred

instruments used especially by the Bobohizan (local ritual specialist) for obstructing evil spirits during spiritual healing. I again use hybrid forms of graphic notation that arise out of collaborative working methods building on the work I have done with choreographic notation. This provides a key I use to unlock and optimise (as well as restrict) the materials to open up other possibilities that arise from the ‘errors’ or unforeseen elements that evolve in rehearsals. In these and upcoming projects, I continue to focus on an aesthetics of ‘in-betweenness’, a prioritisation of ambiguity of gesture, and a dynamic use of techniques that foster an ‘inner listening’ in order to activate and transform the creative energies of all the participants.

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